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Seventy-third session

Official Records

12th plenary meeting
Friday, 28 September 2018, 9 a.m.
New York

President: Ms. Espinosa Garcés. . . . . (Ecuador)

In the absence of the President, Mrs. Gueguen (France), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 9.05 a.m.

Address by Mr. Ilir Meta, President of the Republic of Albania

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Albania.

Mr. Ilir Meta, President of the Republic of Albania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ilir Meta, President of the Republic of Albania, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Meta: Let me first join all the other speakers in congratulating and wishing success to President Espinosa Garcés. Albania wishes to assure her of our full support in her tasks and mission.

The theme of this general debate, "Making the United Nations relevant to all people", takes us to the heart of multilateralism, the kind that our nations have built through global leadership and shared responsibilities for the benefit of peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies. While we share the belief in the need for the constant pursuit of reform, we remain faithful to the fundamental principles of the Organization. We continue to see the United Nations as a multilateral instrument through which peaceful international order is safeguarded.

The United Nations was created in a concert of sovereign wills that produced a corpus of rules and good practices to guide our efforts to find global solutions to global problems. The United Nations has no life of its own outside the will of its Members, nor is it immune to evolving changes and developments. The United Nations has grown as the world has become more global. The issues of democracy, human rights, security, development, technological advances and the worldwide web, the environment and many more increasingly feature on the United Nations agenda, just as they dominate our domestic policies.

Albania takes seriously its responsibility to be active in this debate and thereby add relevance to our part of the world. It is in that spirit that we fully support the vision of Secretary-General Guterres for reform and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals at the national, regional and international levels. We strongly believe that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is universal, because it is relevant and applicable to all the countries of the world. Albania has taken a clear stance through a unanimous resolution adopted by the Albanian Parliament that expresses our firm commitment to implementing and achieving those Goals.

Albania presented its national voluntary report in July, incorporating a combination of its European agenda objectives with those of sustainable development. I would like to emphasize that those strategic documents

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are fully compatible and in line with our national strategic project for European integration. Albania's national strategy for development and integration enshrines the same strategic vision and objectives for development — good governance, the rule of law, a competitive and sustainable economy and the promotion of, and respect for, human rights and fundamental freedoms. As we look forward to a future decision to open accession negotiations with the European Union (EU), we remain committed to progress, with domestic reforms in key areas.

We also consider the EU prerogative of open regional cooperation to be an indispensable policy. With ongoing processes aimed at maintaining peace and integration in the Balkans, we believe that every bilateral achievement among our countries contributes directly to greater peace, security, stability and economic development. We consider that the recently reached agreement between Greece and Macedonia has the opportunity to become a historic achievement. We have called on all political actors in Macedonia, including local Albanian leaders, to be actively engaged in ensuring the success of the referendum to be held on 30 September and to support a vote in favour of the agreement.

NATO's open-door policy towards the Western Balkans remains vital and will be decisive in anchoring the region to the NATO security umbrella and ensuring responsible local ownership. In that context, I strongly welcome the recent messages that our strategic partners sent to Macedonian citizens. Those messages echo their determination to uphold the immense investment over the past two decades in establishing stability and security in the Balkans. The combined commitment of both NATO and the EU is the best guarantor for all the countries and citizens in our region.

That positive momentum can also nurture further progress in the EU-led dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia. The dialogue has entered its final stage and is expected to be concluded with a legally binding agreement on the comprehensive normalization of relations between the two States. It is of paramount importance that the expected agreement should embody positive energy while fostering the European values of inter-ethnic coexistence and harmony. It is extremely important that the agreement mark a breaking away from history and the past and improve the daily lives of the peoples in both States.

Let us bear in mind that for the Balkans, the past is notoriously linked to border changes, ethnic cleansing and violent massive displacements. However, over the past two decades, the region has undergone a tremendous transformation, thanks to the support and involvement of the United Nations and the serious political, social and economic investments of the United States of America and the EU. We call on and welcome every effort on the part of the States Members of the United Nations to promote the international recognition of Kosovo and further support its membership in regional and international organizations. Based on the stability and positive developments in Kosovo, Albania supports a reduction in the number of meetings held by the Security Council on the reports on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

Albania fully supports a more effective United Nations agenda through a more integrated peace and security architecture, with peacekeeping operations as vital instruments and a flagship activity of the United Nations. We support the recent Action for Peacekeeping initiative of the Secretary-General, and we have endorsed the declaration on that initiative. Albania fully supports Security Council resolution 2242 (2015) and the substantively similar resolutions that were adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council on the review of the peacebuilding architecture (resolutions 70/262 and 2282 (2016)). We remain confident that Secretary-General Guterres will keep up the momentum for a revitalized role for the United Nations, with a special focus on peace and security in the world. His platform for the revitalization of the United Nations is promising, and we support it. Allow me to note that more than 6,500 members of the Albanian armed forces and civilians have participated in international peacekeeping operations since 1996. They have contributed to operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chad, South Sudan, Afghanistan and other countries. We have pledged to continue our modest but steady contribution.

Albania has been aligned with all of the United Nations initiatives aimed at fighting terrorism and has ratified 12 of the 19 related United Nations conventions and protocols. Albania joined the immediate response as part of the global struggle against violent extremism and, notably, the Global Coalition against Daesh. As a NATO member, we tripled our troop contribution to Afghanistan last year. Our contribution is a significant part of the collective efforts to fight illegal migration

in the Mediterranean Sea. We are part of the NATO maritime mission in the Aegean Sea and assist the European Border and Coast Guard Agency in stopping migrant smuggling. Albania believes that the protection of civilians, women and children is of crucial importance in peacekeeping operations, because the life of every person is precious.

We welcome the growing attention to the role of regional organizations in security issues. In that connection, we greatly appreciate and welcome the close cooperation between the United Nations and the European Union on the platform of the Common Security and Defence Policy. If we are to have a safer and more peaceful planet, concrete steps must be taken. In that regard, Albania hails the progress that has been made under the leadership of the United States of America on the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and considers it a very positive step forward, not only for that region but the entire planet.

Another issue of serious concern threatening peace and security is the ongoing conflict in Syria. We support all the actions taken by the international actors to end the conflict and stop the use of chemical weapons. The humanitarian situation has worsened, and that tragedy has produced millions of displaced persons and war refugees, which also threatens the security of neighbouring countries and the European continent.

The situation in Libya also continues to seriously concern us, and we affirm our strong commitment to the unity and territorial integrity of Libya and emphasize the need to de-escalate the violence there and combat the spread of terrorism. We have supported the efforts of the international community to develop an inclusive political dialogue among all parties on the future of Libya as the only way to stop the conflict and resolve the Libyan crisis, which is a seriously threatening situation, and not only to its immediate neighbours.

The conflict between Israel and Palestine is still undermining peace and stability in the Middle East. A two-State solution will realistically enable both sides to fulfil their aspirations, put an end to the conflict and achieve a just and lasting peace for Israelis and Palestinians. We have always welcomed and supported the efforts of all sides and those of the international community to find a solution through negotiation.

A few days ago, on behalf of Albania, I expressed our full support for the principles and implementation of the declaration on the Global Call to Action on the World Drug Problem, initiated by the United States. We all need to take bold action and work together to eliminate drugs from the lives of our young people and children and save our societies and our national security and public health. For that reason, we must strengthen international cooperation and build a common basis of understanding of the problem, including taking effective measures against it. In that context, I would also like to underline that Albania enjoys excellent cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

As a country with valuable contributions to the enforcement of peace, stability and progress, our respect for and strong desire to protect universal human rights and our strong faith in multilateralism, Albania seeks to serve as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the period from 2022 to 2023. To that end, we stand ready to engage constructively in conflict prevention and various peace operations, both in the United Nations and in other regional security organizations, in order to implement sustainable development policies and contribute to universal respect for human rights. Albania is committed to protecting and promoting all human rights and supports the integration of the human rights dimension into the agenda of United Nations.

Finally, I would like to address the issue of climate change, which affects every country and continent. It is disrupting national economies and affecting lives, at a high cost to peoples, communities and countries. The historic Paris Agreement on Climate Change of 2015, which is based on the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, provides a legally binding international commitment to engaging with concrete action. Albania has adopted corresponding strategies and action plans and is taking the necessary measures to protect the environment and reduce gas emissions. It is quite clear that the consequences of climate change are moving faster than we are. We must prevent climate change in order to ensure the existence of the planet and save future generations. Collective efforts are needed to address collective challenges.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Albania for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ilir Meta, President of the Republic of Albania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Carl Greenidge, Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana.

Mr. Carl Greenidge, Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Carl Greenidge, Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Greenidge (Guyana): I am pleased to extend our warmest congratulations to Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés and the people of Ecuador on the occasion of her election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. That election is all the more gratifying because Ms. Espinosa Garcés represents the Latin America and Caribbean region. She joins a small but distinguished group of women who have presided over the Assembly in the 72 years of its history. Guyana pledges its unwavering support as she discharges her responsibilities.

Let me also take the opportunity to pay tribute to the previous President, His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, for his successful stewardship of the Assembly's seventy-second session.

I would also like to take a moment to salute the memory of the late former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, a son of Africa and a servant of the peoples of the world whose dedication to the global community was epitomized by a lifetime of selfless service to the United Nations.

Guyana is guided by the value of multilateralism, sometimes termed liberal multilateralism, which has oriented its policies since independence. That rules-based system, with a pivotal role for nation States alongside key international and multilateral institutions, is valued by Member States, particularly small States. It is largely predictable, as it is based on the rule of law, and it has enabled extensive economic development and improvements in human welfare across the globe since its establishment after the 1939-1945 war.

In spite of that success, multilateralism is now under attack in some quarters of the world, and recently there have even been calls for it to be replaced. Some of the challenges fuelling such calls are obvious. The rapid expansion in the number of States over the past few decades has contributed to the exponential growth in the number and complexity of decision-making units in the system. The consequences of the latter have been most evident in some of the very areas in which global multilateral governance has had the greatest success in the past — trade, economic growth and the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

At the United Nations, we are faced with stymied efforts at Security Council reform. The debates about the reforms needed to move us forward and out of this cul-de-sac have yielded many ideas. But rather than turning to outdated models, solutions based on misconceived economic goals, or some form of national exceptionalism, we need to explore complementary organizational forms and arrangements that could help simplify decision-making.

In their attempts to look outside the box for solutions, some observers have turned to the idea of including new partners, such as non-governmental organizations and social networks working alongside States and Governments, as well as to some degree of regionalization of organizational structures — the so-called Web 2.0 option. It may also be worth exploring other voting rules for decision-making. In other words, we need to fashion a more equitable and just variant of multilateralism rather than its replacement.

Serious proposals should seek to preserve the valued elements of multilateralism, because as we face more intractable problems, the capacities of individual States do not give us the ability to solve those problems. It is no wonder that the Secretary-General, in his report on the work of the Organization (A/73/1), asserts that the United Nations offers a platform where Member States, regional organizations and civil society can find solutions to global problems that no nation can resolve by acting alone. Working together is not an option. It is the only answer. Guyana therefore pledges its full support for the strategic vision proposed by

the President, "Dialogue and the strengthening of multilateralism as a catalyst for the well-being of all persons and a sustainable planet".

Global governance and peace are inextricably linked. In that regard, Guyana has noted with satisfaction the efforts of Secretary-General António Guterres, in close collaboration with Member States, to reform and streamline the machinery of the United Nations so as to make it more fit for purpose. We fully support the reform of the peace and security pillar, with its emphasis on preventive diplomacy.

Peace is also inextricably linked to sustainable development. In that regard, the United Nations disarmament agenda is a central element in our efforts to achieve a stable, secure and peaceful world order. Guyana has demonstrated its commitment to that agenda, most recently in its signing and ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. We recognize, however, that the commitment of every Member State to the disarmament agenda is key to achieving the world to which we aspire. The onus is on all of us to fulfil the obligations that we have taken on ourselves by becoming State parties to the various legal instruments concerned with questions of disarmament and non-proliferation.

For Guyana and the wider Caribbean, the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and their associated ammunition poses one of the most serious threats to human security and sustainable development in our region. International drug trafficking, transnational organized crime, unregulated cyberspace and the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons divert resources that could otherwise be invested in other critical areas. We believe that with effective international cooperation and assistance, small countries like Guyana can tackle that illicit trade and ultimately create safer communities, countries and regions and a safer world.

Adherence to the cardinal principles of the sovereign equality of States, respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and the peaceful resolution of disputes are the most effective guarantees of peace. Members are no doubt aware of the controversy that has arisen between Guyana and its neighbour the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela over Venezuela's contention that the 1899 arbitral award, which settled the boundaries between the two countries, is null and void.

On 30 January 2018, Secretary-General Guterres took the decision that the controversy with the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela should be referred to the International Court of Justice. The decision of the Secretary-General is binding on the parties. Accordingly, in March of this year, Guyana filed its application in the Court, seeking an affirmation of the validity of the 1899 arbitral award and the international boundary that it established. Unfortunately, notwithstanding its obligation to do so, Venezuela has so far refused to participate in the proceedings. Guyana sincerely hopes that Venezuela will change its mind. There is still time for it to do so. Guyana wishes to express its gratitude to the Secretary-General for his important contribution to the resolution of this long-standing matter and looks forward to a final judgment by the International Court of Justice.

As a responsible member of the global community, Guyana seeks peace not only in our region but throughout the world where the scourges of war and conflict are an obstacle to development. They divert attention away from the pressing problems of development and the enhancement of human well-being.

With regard to the Middle East, the region of the world that has given birth to thethree great monotheistic religions of our age, we reiterate our call for a two-State solution to the generational conflict between the peoples of Palestine and Israel. Those two peoples have much to gain by living side by side in peace. Like people everywhere, the people of Palestine, including the inhabitants of Gaza, have a right to life, a dignified existence and their own homeland.

Similarly, we deplore the suffering being endured by the Rohingya population. We call on the international community to take the necessary steps to ensure respect for the human rights of the affected population. At the same time, we commend the efforts of Bangladesh to provide a safe haven for the refugee population, with the assistance of international agencies.

Closer to home, in the Caribbean region, we again join the overwhelming majority of the international community in calling for the removal of the trade and economic embargo on our sister Caribbean nation of Cuba. That embargo hinders the right of the Cuban people to development and the enhancement of their material well-being.

Guyana also welcomes the measures being taken to reposition the United Nations development system in order to better align its operations with the goals set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We

accept that that repositioning is a shared responsibility, and Guyana is committed to playing its part. Guyana has fully embraced the holistic and people-centred approach to development enshrined in the Sustainable Development Goals. Our nation is currently engaged in efforts to mainstream and integrate those Goals into our national development strategy, known as the Green State Development Strategy, which seeks to ensure that development is not achieved at the expense of the environment, notwithstanding the fact that Guyana will soon become a significant oil producer, regionally and internationally. We will wean Guyana away from its current near-total dependence on non-renewable sources of energy. We are turning to renewable sources such as hydroelectricity, wind, solar and biomass.

Guyana is unalterably committed to the principles of sustainable development and to working with the international community and all partners to help combat the effects of climate change, including rising sea levels, to which we are particularly vulnerable as a low-lying coastal State. For that reason, Guyana's strategy is to emphasize inclusive transformation, sustainable natural resources, energy transition, resilient infrastructure, human development and well-being, Government and institutional foundations and international cooperation, trade and investment.

Guyana fully recognizes the necessary — nay, critical — contribution of women and girls to its sustainable development. Women and girls constitute more than half of the world's population. The underutilization of their potential represents a serious loss of resources in the global effort to promote human development. We are trying to ensure that the management of that development is undertaken with women and girls fully represented at the helm of the decision-making in Guyana. We therefore applaud the steps taken by the Secretary-General to ensure parity in the appointment of United Nations senior management, including Resident Coordinators in the field.

I want to express Guyana's satisfaction at the successful conclusion this year of the intergovernmental negotiations on a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. Its provisions are consistent with the 2030 Agenda and the commitments made in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. It is our hope that this global framework will help to manage international migration flows in all their dimensions for the benefit of all States, both of origin and destination, and for the benefit of migrants themselves. Guyana looks forward to the successful adoption of the compact at the Intergovernmental Conference to Adopt the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, to be held in December in Marrakech.

We meet this year in disconcerting times. Our planet, the only one we have, faces grave threats on multiple fronts, including to the very existence of life as we know it. As I have already hinted, there are many who question whether our Organization, the nations of the world united, will be able to unite our strength in order to maintain international peace and security while promoting social progress and better standards of living in larger freedom and reaffirming faith in fundamental human rights, the dignity and worth of the human person and the equal rights of men and women. It is for us to decide and to summon the will to work for those ends. Our children and our children's children will judge us. Guyana reaffirms its strong resolution to doing its part within the limits of its capacity and resources.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Carl Greenidge, Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Taban Deng Gai, First Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the First Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan.

Mr. Taban Deng Gai, First Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Taban Deng Gai, First Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Gai (South Sudan): It is my great honour to deliver this statement on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Salva Kiir Mayardit, President of the Republic of South Sudan, who unfortunately could not be here today owing to his engagement in consolidating and

streamlining the implementation of the peace process. I would also like to congratulate the President on her election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session and on being the fourth woman to hold that position. The Republic of South Sudan affirms its commitment to playing its role in supporting the implementation of the agenda she has proposed for this historic session.

On behalf of the people of the Republic of South Sudan and my Government, I would like to reiterate our heartfelt condolences to the entire United Nations family and to the family of the late former Secretary-General His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, who recently passed away. He played a crucial role in supporting the people of the Republic of South Sudan by ensuring that we peace, which was instrumental in the formation of the Republic of South Sudan.

In addition, I was happy to attend the centenary commemoration of the late Madiba (see A/73/PV.4 *et seq.*). It is fitting that the United Nations has dedicated 24 September to the annual holding of the Nelson Mandela Peace Summit. He was an icon of peace whose legacy will live forever.

The theme selected by the President for this session, "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies", resonates very well with the vision of the Republic of South Sudan for peace and prosperity. At this juncture, I would like to share with members some of the successes that we have achieved on our long walk to peace and prosperity.

I stood before the General Assembly last year (see A/72/PV.19) as the First Vice-President of a country in the middle of violent conflict. I stand before the Assembly today in testament to what Members of this Organization have helped achieve in the Republic of South Sudan, especially the relevant specialized United Nations bodies operating in our country, along with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the African Union (AU), the European Union, the Troika, China, the IGAD Partners Forum and the international partners and friends of South Sudan. I am pleased to inform the Assembly that we now have a more united Republic of South Sudan, heading towards peaceful stability. With the continued support and goodwill of our regional and international partners, we are on schedule to hold free and fair general elections after a transitional period of 36 months.

The path leading towards that agreement began at the thirty-first Extraordinary Summit of IGAD Heads of State and Government, held on 12 June 2017 in Addis Ababa on the situation in the Republic of South Sudan. The Heads of State and Government agreed on the need for the establishment of a high-level revitalization forum for all of the parties to the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. That process includes new stakeholders and various groups, including civil society, women's groups, religious leaders, young people and eminent persons as observers. The purpose of the High-level Revitalization Forum, as stated at the Extraordinary Summit, was threefold: first, to institute a permanent ceasefire; secondly, to give fresh impetus to the inclusive implementation of the provisions of the peace agreement; and thirdly, to agree on a realistic new timeline and implementation schedule for the holding of democratic elections at the end of the transitional period.

The Government of the Republic of South Sudan unreservedly embraced the IGAD-led High-level Revitalization Forum. Its objectives were crystal clear, and the delegation of the Government of the Republic of South Sudan attended the meetings of the Forum fully prepared to take advantage of every opportunity to achieve comprehensive and lasting peace. The thirty-second Extraordinary Summit of IGAD Heads of State and Government on the situation in the Republic of South Sudan entrusted His Excellency Field Marshal Omer Hassan Ahmed Al-Bashir, President of the Republic of the Sudan, to facilitate a second round of face-to-face discussions with His Excellency General Salva Kiir Mayardit, Mr. Riek Machar and other political leaders to resolve the outstanding issues pertaining to the governance and security arrangements emerging from the Revitalization Forum.

The signing of the Khartoum Declaration of Agreement between the Parties to the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan took place on 27 June. General Salva Kiir Mayardit and Mr. Riek Machar, together with other political leaders, approved under that agreement: first, the declaration of a permanent ceasefire throughout South Sudan, based on the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement signed on 21 December 2017; secondly, the adoption of security arrangements to build one national army, a police force and other security organs of an inclusive character; and thirdly, the conclusion of an agreement on the revised bridging proposal before the closure of the Khartoum round of talks. On

12 September, all of the parties — the Transitional Government of National Unity, the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement/Sudanese People's Liberation Army in Opposition, the South Sudan Opposition Alliance, former detainees, other political parties and other stakeholders with regard to the original peace Agreement — signed the final Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan in Addis Ababa. The signing was graciously attended and witnessed by the IGAD Heads of State and Government, the international community, the African Union, the European Union, the United Nations, the Troika, China, the IGAD Partners Forum and international partners and friends of the Republic of South Sudan.

In addition to the recently signed Revitalized Peace Agreement, since December 2015 we have been working on a national dialogue and grass-roots people-to-people peace initiatives. It is our belief that such a complementary three-track approach is the only way to consolidate the efforts for peace on the ground, as well as to ensure the restoration of accountability and the upholding of human rights in my country. In South Sudan's unique environment, a multilayered approach such as the one adopted by my Government is the best way forward.

It is therefore against that background that the Transitional Government of National Unity has embraced the full implementation of the peace Agreement as the only instrument crucial to achieving that mission and vision. The Government of the Republic of South Sudan is ready to welcome forces from the guarantors of the Revitalized Agreement to monitor its implementation and encourages IGAD and the AU to discuss with the Security Council how the Regional Protection Force can help to monitor and ensure that peace holds in the Republic of South Sudan. With regard to security-sector reforms, which are a major pillar of the Revitalized Agreement, my Government reiterates its commitment and resolve to implement transitional security arrangements encompassing a range of security-sector reforms, including the cantonment of forces. Moreover, the Government is committed to transforming the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army, and its structures are already in place to achieve the aim of creating a professional national army.

I am very pleased to inform the Assembly of the formation of the National Pre-Transitional Committee, which is made up of all of the stakeholders who will be entrusted with the functions of overseeing and coordinating the implementation of the peace agreement activities during the pretransitional period.

The achievement of lasting peace requires establishing mechanisms to tackle impunity and ensure accountability. In the recently decided Terrain Hotel case, the Government interviewed victims in order to be able to hold the responsible individuals accountable. A detailed investigation formula and evidence-gathering process, carried out with the support of the United States Government through the Federal Bureau of Investigation, enabled the victims to identify their attackers and enabled the prosecution of those responsible to the full extent of the law. Since the eruption of the conflict in December 2013, the court martial has tried 204 cases, including the Terrain Hotel case. The Terrain Hotel trials demonstrated the commitment of the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement/Sudanese People's Liberation Army in Opposition to holding its members to account for their crimes, including abuse of civilians.

The President took the Chair.

It goes without saying that war has blighted the economy of the Republic of South Sudan. We have seen tremendous losses of life, property and human dignity. No report affects my heart as much as the sight of our young and infirm dying needlessly and suffering from deprivation. Indeed, I have been asked specifically why my Government believes that this time peace is permanent. There is an African proverb that advises a person to look at the place where he slipped, because there he will find what made him fall.

It is through a change of leaders' attitudes from entrenched positions that we have moved towards a conciliatory and accommodating Government of National Unity. My President, Mr. Kiir Mayardit, has compromised on many positions and worked with more stakeholders for the sake of peace. The IGAD-led peace initiatives have demonstrated the way in which African solutions to African problems can lead to an agreement. I want to express my heartfelt appreciation to IGAD, the Republic of the Sudan in particular, and the broader international community for the critical roles they played, without which the Revitalized Peace Agreement would not have happened.

In that regard, given the positive role being played by the Republic of the Sudan in the peace process in South Sudan and the region, we appeal for a speedy

normalization of the relationship between the Sudan and the United States of America. Moreover, we call for the total lifting of the sanctions against the Sudan.

We urge the Government of the Sudan to find a speedy resolution to the contentious issues in the Blue Nile, Southern Kordofan and Darfur regions, based on our strong belief that stability in those areas is critical for total and lasting peace in South Sudan and the Sudan, as well as the region as a whole.

On Abyei, as we await the settlement of its final status, the Government of South Sudan reiterates its support for the recommendations of the Secretary-General in his letter to the Security Council dated 20 August (S/2018/776). We also commend the good work of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) and remain grateful to Ethiopia, the sole UNISFA troop contributor.

We also urge Member States to continue supporting efforts at the level of the African Union to find a political solution to the problem of Abyei. We call especially for the implementation of the 21 September 2012 proposal of the AU High-Level Implementation Panel for the Sudan and former President Mbeki, which has been endorsed more than six times to date by the AU Peace and Security Council. It is high time that we brought an end to the suffering of the Ngok Dinka people.

Conflict by itself can also be a vehicle for positive change, if we are aware of where we have come from, where we are now and where we are going. As brothers and sisters, we have hurt each other. As we seek national healing, President Kiir Mayardit has empowered a cross-section of community representatives and mediators to set up national dialogue and other grass-roots people-to-people peace initiatives.

The national dialogue was launched to create a multilayered approach to repairing the social fabric. It has been heavily criticized by some external observers, mainly because of a misconception that it was considered a substitute for peace talks. At the launch of the national dialogue in 2015, its aim was to create a forum in which the causes of conflict could be discussed and, among other things, to ask the people important questions about matters such as national identity, governance and the relationship between the communities, including the causes of intercommunal conflict.

The grass-roots component has been the most effective. Members of the committee visited regions, starting at the community level, asking questions designed to identify the causes of division while also searching for solutions to those divisions and how to heal them. The process enabled those who had not had an opportunity to have their voices heard to begin expressing their various viewpoints. The reports from the grass-roots initiatives were candid, as communities were allowed to express their opinions freely without fear of repercussions. We look forward to seeing the next steps of that process as we enter the transitional period.

As we work to make the United Nations relevant to all people through global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies, I would like to reiterate that my Government welcomes the presence and support of United Nations agencies. However, the terms of that relationship need to be reconsidered, specifically when it comes to protecting vulnerable citizens in the host country. It is only through a reflective approach that we can move forward in adapting the nature of this institution to make it fit for today's environment.

Last but not least, as I speak of reviving peace in the Republic of South Sudan, it is only right to mention the late former President John F. Kennedy, who said in an address to the Assembly on 20 September 1963:

> "Peace is a daily, a weekly, a monthly process, gradually changing opinions, slowly eroding old barriers, quietly building new structures." (*A/PV.1209, para.38*)

I call on members of the United Nations family, including those who are sceptical, to give peace a chance in the Republic of South Sudan by supporting the critical implementation phase of the peace agreement. South Sudan will continue its cooperation with the United Nations, the regional bodies, IGAD, the East African Community, the AU, the EU, the Troika, China, other international partners and all our friends as we work to enhance conditions in our country. We undertake to consolidate peace and justice, rebuild strong institutions in our country and stabilize our economy.

We call on all Member States as partners to support, cooperate, consult and engage in dialogue with us as we join together in achieving the agenda for making the United Nations relevant to all people through global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies. That is our agenda, too.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the First Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Taban Dei Gei, First Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Boyko Borissov, Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria.

Mr. Boyko Borissov, Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Boyko Borissov, Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Borissov (Bulgaria) (*spoke in Bulgarian; English text provided by the delegation*): I believe we should appreciate the fact that the theme of this year's general debate deals with global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies. It is comprehensive and provides food for thought on the direction in which our world should develop — and this international Organization along with it.

Global leadership is, first and foremost, a great responsibility. In order for us to achieve sustainability and standards of living that uphold the principle of dignity for every human being on the planet, it is absolutely crucial that we demonstrate our commitment and unity as we face the challenges of our time. I am convinced that we are all aware that we need to act with determination and unity in sharing the responsibility to ensure peace, equality and the sustainability of our communities.

The Republic of Bulgaria has worked constantly and actively to sustain a world order based on the rule of law and to reaffirm the principles of multilateral cooperation. That is why I would like to highlight that it is the destiny of the United Nations to play a central role in that effort, and we therefore actively support the Organization in its efforts.

The main global challenges, such as conflict resolution and peacekeeping, strengthening global security and stability, countering climate change, terrorism and ever-deepening inequality, cannot be addressed by one country alone. Those challenges require shared responsibility and everyone's contribution.

Global peace and security depend on the stability and sustainable development of the various parts of our globalized world. Every country, large or small, has the responsibility and capacity to make a significant contribution to security and prosperity in the region in which it is located. For example, this past Monday, at the high-level event on the global drug problem organized by President Trump, every participating country made a firm commitment to fighting that global scourge. It was not by chance that Bulgaria was one of the co-hosts of that event. We have already pledged and proven our commitment to fighting the drug problem through our actions. Even as we speak, Bulgarian customs authorities and prosecutors have managed to seize hundreds of kilogrammes of drugs, making my country a positive example. In order to achieve peace, security and stability, as well as the Sustainable Development Goals, we all need to take more actions of that kind.

The United Nations plays an integral part in promoting the fair use of global opportunities for the benefit of all. Inclusive and sustainable global growth underpins the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, which are universal in nature and closely interlinked, is the key to addressing our current global challenges.

During the first half of this year, the Bulgarian presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU) invested considerable efforts in achieving marked progress and consensus among member States on the main goals of the 2030 Agenda. We are proud that during our six-month tenure of the presidency, the European Union adopted a mandate to start negotiations for the signing of a new partnership agreement with 79 countries from Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. The negotiations seek to achieve a modern, dynamic partnership with those countries as an important instrument in tackling global challenges, ranging from poverty and inequality to the promotion of peace and sustainable development for all.

Allow me to highlight some of the idiosyncrasies of the region in which my country, Bulgaria, is situated.

This year we mark the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War, which serves to remind us of the importance of the Balkans in the past as well as the relevance of the region in the present day. The Balkans have often been the source of conflicts and to this day the embers of some in that area continue to burn.

Despite the circumstances and obstacles they face, the countries of South-Eastern Europe, especially those in the Western Balkans, have managed to make remarkable progress on important and much debated issues. It took several decades to reach the current state of affairs, which is why we should not hesitate any further to offer the international community's unequivocal political support to every State or initiative that deserves support.

Compelling proof of the progress made by the Western Balkan countries can be seen in the recent signing of agreements between Sofia and Skopje, as well as that between Athens and Skopje. Those agreements are crucial steps towards stability and security in South-Eastern Europe and towards the Euro-Atlantic prospects of the Western Balkan countries. The agreement between Podgorica and Pristina on the border demarcation, which just came into force, is also a significant milestone. Those documents not only show but also help to create the new spirit of relations between and among the countries of that region.

I will provide one more example. Based on the historic opportunity that the rotating presidency of the Council of the EU offered us, Bulgaria initiated a process that put the Western Balkans back on the agenda of European politics. Opportunities for cooperation and the participation of countries from outside the region in the construction of the new Balkan infrastructure have already started to attract interest and investments.

An important and emblematic expression of that process was the Leaders' Summit of the States members of the EU and the Western Balkan countries in our capital, Sofia, in May this year. That was the first meeting of its kind since the Thessaloniki Summit in 2003. Connectivity in all its dimensions was the focus of the discussion, as was the joint response of the young and relatively small Balkan States to the common challenges to security that we all face, such as irregular migration, organized crime, terrorism, hybrid threats, cybersecurity and misinformation. The Sofia Declaration adopted at the Summit reaffirmed the European prospects for the region and made them an achievable goal.

We are aware that that is just the beginning of a new path that is encouraging but neither easy nor quick. However, the stakes are high, not only for the citizens of those countries and for their EU neighbours and friends, but also for the global processes aimed at economic and political strengthening and development. We cannot leave blank spots marked by lagging development, weak economies and societies susceptible to the present global threats.

In two days' time, the citizens of our neighbour to the south-east, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, will have to take a landmark decision about their future — whether to endorse the unprecedented compromise achieved with neighbouring Greece, which will clear their path towards Euro-Atlantic integration. It is a truly historic moment and shows exactly why we should support the citizens of that country as they take that new decision for their country.

Two of our other neighbours face a very difficult dilemma. We support the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, and we welcome their determination to move forward in normalizing bilateral relations with the help of EU mediation. At the same time, we deem the potential re-tailoring of borders a non-viable solution, not just in this case but in general.

Important elections for Bosnia and Herzegovina are coming up in October. They will serve as a key test of the country's unity and determination to progress further along the path of European integration. As we can see, the situation in that part of Europe is very dynamic and fraught with important events that for many years to come will determine the direction of the region's development and, to a large extent, the state of the EU. What we have managed to achieve so far as a result of our work within the main priorities of Bulgarian foreign policy is part of our contribution to peace and security on the European continent and the world beyond.

However, the generally optimistic prospects for the Western Balkans and South-Eastern Europea are in drastic contrast to the conflicts that surround them on three sides — in Ukraine to the north-east, in the Middle East to the south-east and in Libya to the south. Migration flows and the increasing threat of terrorism are the direct consequences of conflicts around the world. I will address those topics in due course.

First, I would like to draw the Assembly's attention to the ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine. In the past four and a half years, according to data from the United Nations, the total number of victims in the conflict has exceeded 10,000, and the number of wounded stands at 24,000. There is special cause for concern about the deteriorating humanitarian and environmental situation in Donbas. In addition to such dire statistics, there has been no real progress in implementing the Minsk agreements, which, in our view, represent the only way to a peaceful and sustainable solution to the conflict. The existing differences with regard to the deployment of international peacekeeping forces in eastern Ukraine under the auspices of the United Nations continue. We, the leaders of the States Members of this international Organization, share the responsibility to establish a peaceful, fair and sustainable world order that rests on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. I call on the Assembly to redouble its efforts to achieve peace and stability in Ukraine without infringing on its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The situation in Syria remains tragic. Despite the efforts of the international community, military activities in the country continue, resulting in increasing numbers of casualties among the civilian population, as well as thousands of new migrants. As a country that is geographically close to Syria, Bulgaria supports efforts to prevent any further escalation of the military conflict. To that end, we support the continuation of political dialogue and intra-Syria negotiations, with the aim of finding a permanent political solution to the crisis.

We support the launch of international initiatives to create conditions that are conducive to restarting the Middle East peace process through bilateral talks. We believe that that is the way to achieve a final agreement, based on the principle of two States coexisting in peace and stability. That is why we greatly appreciate and strongly support the efforts of Nickolay Mladenov, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, to improve the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip as soon as possible.

With regard to Libya, Bulgaria supports the United Nations Action Plan for Libya and the efforts of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya, whose primary task is to stabilize the country and reach national conciliation in the context of the existing political and institutional fragmentation. We support the agreement reached by the four key political leaders for conducting presidential and parliamentary elections.

It is impossible to end all conflicts, but I would nevertheless like to say a few words about another important issue related to peace and security in the world, especially after some of the statements we have heard from Mr. Abbas, Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Rouhani. We are of the opinion that in the current context, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on the Iranian nuclear programme continues to be a key element in the international security architecture. We also support all efforts for the full, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and the establishment of permanent peace in North-East Asia.

Migration flows and refugee crises are a global phenomenon, the result of a myriad political and socioeconomic factors, and of conflicts in various parts of the world in particular. Let me underscore clearly and right from the start that irregular migration is a serious challenge to our societies' security and stability. That is why we need to strengthen cooperation among all the countries concerned, including countries of origin, transit and destination, in order to reach a sustainable and permanent solution. It must fully guarantee human rights and the sovereign right of States to ensure the security of their borders.

The efforts of the international community should focus chiefly on the main causes of migration, which are political, socioeconomic and natural — that is, the result of natural disasters. We should pay special attention to the various dimensions of development and the integral link between development and security. However, if we do not support those efforts with active mediation and peacekeeping and do not manage to resolve current conflicts and prevent future ones, our chances for success are doomed. That is where I see the crucial and unique role of the United Nations, which can and should be strengthened if there is sufficient political will on the part of Member States.

During its presidency of the Council of the European Union, Bulgaria took an active part in the process of negotiating the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. Finalizing the language of the compact is an achievement based on multilateral cooperation, and I am confident that its adoption at the Intergovernmental Conference in Morocco in December will lay the groundwork for the successful

implementation of the first-ever global framework for cooperation in the area of international migration.

We in Bulgaria also welcome the completion of the consultations on the text of the global compact on refugees, which constitutes a comprehensive response to the problem of large-scale migration flows, based on the principle of shared responsibility. We have recently seen an increase in the numbers of terrorist attacks all over the world, as well as in the number of innocent victims of terrorism. Irregular migration waves have enabled the infiltration of our countries and communities by former fighters from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and other places, including trained members of terrorist organizations, such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and Al-Qaida.

Bulgaria categorically condemns all forms and expressions of terrorism, no matter what cause they claim to support. They undermine peace, security and the social and economic development of States. That is why an effective response to the problem requires the coordinated efforts of the entire international community. That is also why we support the United Nations in its capacity as a universal organization that possesses the full range of instruments to lead and coordinate the process, along with facilitating the exchange of experience among regional organizations and national agencies and assisting in streamlining their efforts.

We support the work of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism and the specific steps taken to intensify the Organization's operations in that regard, including support for the organization of the High-level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States. One priority is taking measures to protect young people from being radicalized or joining terrorist groups, as well as to neutralize the influence of persons and organizations instigating terrorist attacks.

This year we mark the seventieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and for the first time Bulgaria will present its candidacy for membership of the Human Rights Council. We rely on the support of Member States. That is not an end in itself for us but rather an expression of our consistent policy of working for the protection and affirmation of human rights in Bulgaria and at the global level. Our presidency of the Council of the European Union also gave Bulgaria the opportunity to showcase its contribution to various aspects of the protection of human rights. We intend to continue to share our best practices as a member of the Human Rights Council. The values that give meaning to any political effort subsume the past, the present and the future. That is also what allows us to better comprehend and appreciate our present efforts.

There is a moment in Bulgaria's history of which we Bulgarians are justifiably proud. Seventy-five years ago, in some of the darkest years of the Second World War, Bulgaria's citizens, Church and enlightened leaders and intellectuals stood up to attempts to deport nearly 50,000 Bulgarian Jews to the death camps. They managed to prevent that from happening. Bulgarians achieved that at a time when Nazi Germany had subordinated and occupied almost all of Europe. Bulgaria is proud of the people who managed to save nearly 50,000 Jews.

I share the story about the saving of Bulgarian Jews because it carries a very strong message that is relevant to the present day and to all who feel threatened. It shows that humaneness and courage can triumph over power and irrationality and save lives. It reminds us that we should never stop fighting for human life and the right causes. The salvation of the Bulgarian Jews is a much-needed example that can reassure us that values are not a forgotten notion but offer a chance for a better future.

The Bulgarian example should become more widely known to more people so that it can give courage to others around the world who are fighting to defend their lives and those lives of others and to protect dignity and human rights. It is our mission at present not to allow xenophobia and anti-Semitism to return or to permit a disregard for the right to live based on race, ethnicity or other factors. We Bulgarians know that it is possible and that it has happened before.

Our main task is to guarantee peace and prosperity around the world. I am convinced that that is attainable, not through arms or battles but rather through a greater sense of humanity and responsibility. We also need more than ever to strengthen the role and authority of the United Nations in its global operations. I am confident that, with effort and good will on the part of all Member States, that grand goal can be achieved.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Boyko Borissov, Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa.

Mr. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Malielegaoi (Samoa): I have had the privilege of addressing the General Assembly over the past 21 years as Samoa's Prime Minister, and my message has remained consistent throughout those years. Put simply, climate change poses our single greatest threat, especially to small island developing States like Samoa — albeit not through our doing or choice — and the need for the international community to take effective action to mitigate its impact is urgent and real.

Climate change also encompasses the breadth of security issues facing our blue Pacific region, including human security, environmental and resource security and transnational crime and cybersecurity. As we have explained to the United Nations before, climate change is one of the most pressing security challenges facing island countries, affecting food security and access to safe water and fundamentally affecting our ability to draw sustenance from the pristine ocean and seas that surround us. It is the highest priority challenge facing the countries of the world and does not discriminate between rich and poor.

The logic of our perspective is simple. Climate change affects the whole of Samoa's realities and aspirations. It affects our society, economy, culture, faith and way of life and will continue to be our overriding policy concern and major preoccupation, and that of our entire Pacific region, today and well into the future.

It is a societal problem requiring a decisive response from the world community. Its global reach and impact should unite and strengthen our resolve, not weaken and divide us. As a united community, there is a great deal that we can do to arrest, and even reverse, the threat of climate change, although its effects are worsening by the day. Acting alone, no one country or single group of nations or organization can win the war against climate change. The divergent, yet inextricably linked, interests of Member States demand that we work together.

Our Paris Agreement on Climate Change was a beacon of hope, especially for vulnerable island States. It is based on shared responsibilities, trust, collaboration and principled action. It demonstrates a new brand of cooperation and a broad outlook, where the narrow pursuits of self-interest and a reliance on economic and political expediencies were to be set aside. It was meant to be a timely reminder that no action is too small or insignificant. All contributions matter, and every action counts, irrespective of who provides it. Importantly, it places the responsibility of addressing climate change squarely on every leader and every individual country in terms of the implementation of their nationally determined contributions to the Paris Agreement.

It is indeed worrisome and alarming that the level of commitments to the Paris Agreement by Member States will not keep global warming anywhere below 1.5° C, which is the ideal and moral goal required to save planet Earth. Without that, the continuing existence of low-lying islands in our Pacific region and elsewhere will be in grave doubt. We must work together with a sense of urgency and commitment to address climate change today. It should not only be science that recommends what we should do but also our very conscience and political will to follow through.

Clearly, we want leaders who view the world as a single constituency where all must work together within the limits of their capacity and capability to be part of the total solution. Samoa also wants to be part of that solution, because it is in our interest to do so. As for those suggesting that they are being asked to implement bold actions just for the sake of our vulnerable islands, they need to be quietly reminded that in the final analysis, implementation initiatives will ultimately benefit their economies, their people and the survival

of their countries as well. In fact, the whole world will stand to benefit.

For vulnerable countries, the issue does not require the setting of new targets, the commissioning of more studies and reports or even more polite talking-shops and structured dialogue sessions. What is needed now is adaptation in the interest of long-term survival. The United Nations remains our last best hope to provide the political will and the necessary commitment to turn the tide against climate change.

Samoa appeals to States Members of our Organization in positions of world leadership to lead the charge in finding and implementing solutions to the causes of climate change. As custodians of our world's environment, we owe it to our future generations to do what needs to be done quickly and decisively. In the same way that nations in leadership roles are called to account to do the right thing for our world, all States Members of the United Nations must uphold their part of the bargain in the work that needs to be done. Without that cooperation from all Member States, reaching the objectives that we all know must be achieved will continue to elude us.

The Pacific region is already dealing with the destructive impact of climate change and disasters. Unprecedented cyclones, floods, droughts, sea level rise and ocean acidification are taking their toll on the health and well-being of our peoples, environment and economies. Disaster-related economic losses, as a percentage of gross domestic product, are higher in Pacific island countries than almost anywhere else in the world.

Our people are waiting; the world is watching. It is incumbent on each individual leader and country to raise the level of ambition, not just as an aspirational goal but as deliverables under the Paris Agreement. For the Pacific peoples and our blue Pacific region, urgent, ambitious action on climate change is the only option.

We welcome the determination that we heard in the Secretary-General's remarks to the General Assembly earlier this month to sound the alarm on the need for bolder action on climate change (see A/73/PV.6). Those are big demands to deliver on, and it would be naive to think otherwise. But when the future existence of sovereign island nations, populations and cultures are at stake, there is a moral imperative for the world to act decisively and collectively.

The Pacific leaders are increasingly conscious of and concerned about the security of our region, and we look at security not only from the orthodox perspective of State security but also for what it means for us as Pacific communities. The Framework for Pacific Regionalism identifies security as one of the four objectives of regionalism, a security that ensures stable and safe human, environmental and political conditions for all.

The Pacific Islands Forum leaders have renewed their commitment to work together as one blue Pacific continent, particularly in view of the renewed geopolitical interests in the Pacific region. Suddenly, the Pacific is swimming in a rising tide of so-called fit-for-purpose strategies, stretching from the tip of Africa, encompassing the Indian Ocean and morphing into the vast blue Pacific Ocean continent, which is our home and place. The big Powers are doggedly pursuing strategies to widen and extend their reach and creating a far-reaching sense of insecurity. The renewed vigour with which a strategy based on a free and open Indo-Pacific Ocean is being advocated and pursued leaves us with much uncertainty. For the Pacific, there is a real risk of privileging Indo over Pacific.

While the Pacific region is currently enjoying a period of relative stability, drivers of instability exist in the region and beyond. The 2017 State of Pacific Regionalism report indicated that shifting global and regional geopolitics are creating an increasingly complex and crowded region that places the Pacific at the centre of contemporary global geopolitics. That trend, coupled with broader challenges, such as climate change, rising inequality, resource depletion, maritime-boundary disputes and advances in technology, will continue to shape the Pacific regional security environment.

While the world belabours the issues of security based on military might and the wonders of technological advancement in achieving such ends, our priority in the Pacific is to maintain the stability of our Governments and countries. We can do that by reviewing of our governance pathways and ensuring that our elected leaders respond to people's needs. Pacific Island Forum members have a very proud history of working collectively in response to events and issues that have challenged regional security, peace and stability, from the 1985 Rarotonga Treaty, which created a nuclear-free zone in the South Pacific, to a collective approach to addressing the existential threat of climate change.

The Pacific region's current geopolitical and geostrategic context underlines the need for an integrated and comprehensive security architecture incorporating an expanded concept of security. A stable and resilient security environment provides the platform for achieving the region's sustainable development aspirations.

In 2017, in recognition of those considerations, the Pacific Forum leaders agreed to build on the Biketawa Declaration and other security-related declarations issued by the Forum as a foundation for future regional strategic responses, recognizing the importance of an expanded concept of security and regional cooperation in building resilience to disasters and climate change. The leaders have also prioritized action on climate change and disaster-risk management, fisheries and ocean management and conservation, all of which have significant security elements.

As if being vulnerable to climate change were not a lifelong challenge, the label of Pacific small island developing State can also bring with it unintended trials and tribulations. For far too long, the international community has been given to believe that our States are little and classified as have-nots. We are susceptible to being characterized as countries that have little and that should be grateful for whatever is offered to us. We are highly protective of our means of livelihood and have embraced regional action to ensure the sustainability of our fisheries resources. We are actively asserting our ambitions to ensure that there is inheritance for the generations to come. Any approach to engagement with partners must be genuine and durable, premised on understanding, friendship, mutual benefit and a collective ambition to achieve sustainable results. It must also be non-partisan and non-interventionist. I repeat that any engagement must be non-partisan and non-interventionist.

In that process, our partners have fallen short of acknowledging the integrity of Pacific leadership and the responsibility that our leaders have for every decision made in order to garner support for the sustainable development of their nations. Some might say that there is a patronizing nuance that suggests that Pacific nations do not know what they are doing or are incapable of reaping the benefits of close relations with countries that are, and will be, in the region for some time to come. To the extent that emerging partners have engaged with Pacific countries without conditionality, the relationships are perceived to be associated with problems of corruption or unprecedented environmental degradation. We have the tendency to be bemused by the fact that the reaction is an attempt to hide what we see as strategic neglect.

Where we are now would not have been possible without the valuable support of our circle of partners and the value of the partnerships that we have nurtured and cultivated over the years to respond to our people's multitudinous needs. The friendly relations that we have with some partners are construed by others as compromising and obtrusive, prompting some to speak up for us in order to ward off the influences that we are supposedly too naive to recognize. By the same token, we are given alternatives that reflect interests beyond altruism and improvement of the poor. As Pacific leaders we need to ask ourselves what we ought to do in order to make a difference for ourselves and for the world and to promote our values, which are premised on peace, stability and security.

Our geographical isolation and insularity no longer shield or protect us from today's increasingly complex and dynamic security challenges — transnational crime, nuclear proliferation, challenges to sovereignty and humanitarian crises. The rules-based international system is being bent out of shape. Gone are the days when we took only what we needed from our environment and were much more conscious of the importance of the continuity of our cultures and values, unadulterated by the infringing, impinging world around us. In those days we did not worry much about borders because the original migrations of our peoples defined for us our ocean space and place. Poverty was not a part of our consciousness because we cared for each other and the oceans provided their bounty.

We should not be influenced by economic dependence, as that is a compromise in itself. We should seek to strengthen domestic cohesion, develop resilience and rethink our governance pathways. The leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum are committed to a vision for the Pacific — that it should be a region of peace, harmony, security, social inclusion and prosperity so that all Pacific people can lead free, healthy and productive lives now and into the future. Moreover, we have committed to working together to achieve that vision. The blue Pacific platform offers all Pacific countries the adaptive capabilities to address a changing geostrategic landscape. The opportunity to realize the full benefits of the blue Pacific rests on our ability to work and stand together as a political

bloc. The challenge for us is to maintain solidarity in the face of the intense engagement of an ever-growing number of partners in our region. We should never let that challenge divide us.

In four weeks' time, Samoa will host the interregional meeting of small island developing States and their development partners in preparation for the five-year review of the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA Pathway) during the high-level week in September next year. My Government looks forward to welcoming our guests, and we thank Member States, in particular small island developing States, for agreeing to allow the SAMOA Pathway to make a brief return to its namesake and birthplace.

Let me conclude by acknowledging the support of all States Members of the United Nations, Samoa's circle of friends, that supported our candidate's re-election to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Wang Yi, State Councillor and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Wang Yi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Every September, global attention is focused on the United Nations and on this stately Assembly Hall. People watch closely what is happening here, hoping that the United Nations will deliver peace, development, harmony and prosperity to the world. People look to the United Nations to help them realize their dreams for a better life, to a United Nations that is committed to making itself relevant to all people, thereby making our world a better place for everyone to live in.

The contemporary international order, which began with the founding of the United Nations, is based on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and is enhanced by the vision and practice of multilateralism. It has brought about general peace and rapid development over the past 70 years or more. A people-centred philosophy has gained wide acceptance, and a broad consensus has formed on the need for interdependence and win-win cooperation.

Yet it is also true that the international order today faces problems and needs steady reform and improvement. The world is changing. As we celebrate humankind's proud achievements and progress, we must never lose sight of the challenges and difficulties we face in an ever-changing world. We must remain vigilant. What we see today is that international rules and multilateral mechanisms are under attack, and the international landscape is filled with uncertainties and destabilizing factors. Should we stay committed to multilateralism or let unilateralism have its way? Should we seek to uphold the architecture of the world order or allow it to be eroded and collapse? Those are critical questions bearing on the future of all countries and the destiny of humankind, questions that all countries must carefully reflect on and seek answers to.

China's answer is clear cut. All along, China has upheld the international order and pursued multilateralism. Though once kept out of the United Nations for 22 years, China has never wavered in its commitment to multilateralism and to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. China stayed true to its commitment throughout the negotiation process on its return to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and then its accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) — negotiations that lasted 15 long years and were concluded at a certain price. China fulfilled its promise and integrated itself into the world economic system. After the international financial crisis broke out, China chose not to stand idly by; instead it worked together with other countries to get through those challenging times. For many years, China has contributed more than 30 per cent of global economic growth. It has played its part in helping with the global recovery. In the face of new developments and severe challenges, China will keep to its commitment and remain a champion of multilateralism.

Standing at this rostrum in 2015, Chinese President Xi Jinping, in his statement reflecting the key understanding of humankind's common interest and the future of our planet, called for the building of a community with a shared future for humankind (seeA/70/PV.13). That initiative is in keeping with the trend of history, and it echoes the call of the times. It adds to our conviction and strength as we pursue our common endeavour to protect this global village. It

points us in the direction where we should work together to open up an even better future for humankind.

To uphold multilateralism in this new era, we believe that the following principles must be adhered to. First, we must pursue win-win cooperation. Our world is undergoing profound changes, never before seen in this century. Also never seen before are the problems and challenges we are facing. No country can meet them alone or stay immune to their impact. We must replace confrontation with cooperation and coercion with consultation. We must remain united as a big family. Instead of forming closed circles, we must promote common development through consultation instead of taking a "winner-takes-all" approach. That is a sure way to usher in a bright future.

Secondly, we must act in accordance with rules and order. State-to-State relations must be based on credibility, not the wilful revocation of commitments. International cooperation should be guided by rules, not impulse. Practising multilateralism is, first and foremost, about upholding the Charter of the United Nations, observing international law and basic norms governing international relations, and honouring international agreements reached through negotiations.

Thirdly, we must uphold the principles of fairness and justice. In international affairs, fairness and justice mean equality among all countries, big or small. They signify the responsibility of big countries to help the small, and rich ones to assist the poor. Fairness and justice also mean respect for other countries' sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, as well as their choice of development paths and right to a better life and increased development opportunities.

Fourthly, we must act to deliver real results. Multilateralism is not based on empty rhetoric. It must be pursued to solve problems. Efforts must be targeted, results-oriented and measured by visible progress. Whether a multilateral mechanism works depends on the will and engagement of countries. It is imperative that we work together to uphold the international system with the United Nations at its core, as well as the multilateral trading system centred on the World Trade Organization. Multilateralism requires a strong United Nations. China supports Secretary-General Guterres in advancing reform of the United Nations system in the three critical areas of peace and security, economic development and internal management. That reform should be led by Member States, and it should prioritize the concerns of developing countries, make the United Nations more effective and enhance oversight and accountability. Stable and predictable funding is critical to the proper functioning of the United Nations. China will continue to fulfil its financial obligations and calls on other Member States to pay their membership contributions and peacekeeping assessments on time and in full.

The momentum of humankind's drive forward towards development and progress is unstoppable. Peace, reconciliation and harmony represent the predominant trend, while war, conflict and terror are opposed by all. Equality, mutual trust and win-win cooperation are key words of our times, whereas power politics and the law of the jungle find no support. As a major responsible country, China is committed to the path of peaceful development, and it will work together with other countries and contribute its share to global peace and security.

Over the past year, the situation on the Korean peninsula has seen a major turnaround thanks to the efforts of all the parties concerned. China, for its part, has contributed to that progress. China supports the comprehensive improvement of relations between the north and the south of the peninsula, as well as efforts to facilitate dialogue between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States. China encourages the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to continue moving towards denuclearization. We believe that it is also incumbent on the United States to respond in a timely and positive manner so as to truly meet the Democratic People's Republic of Korea halfway. China will continue to honour its international responsibilities and obligations and will strictly implement the Security Council resolutions related to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. China calls on the Security Council to take timely action in the light of developments and changes in the situation so as to create more favourable conditions for a peaceful settlement of the issue on the peninsula through political and diplomatic means. To effectively settle the issue we need complete denuclearization and the establishment of a peace mechanism. Only when those components move in tandem can the issue be truly resolved and peace achieved.

Regarding the Iranian nuclear issue, now is a crucial time for the continued implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The JCPOA is a consensus-based multilateral agreement endorsed

by the Security Council. It serves the common interests of all the parties concerned and the international community at large. If it is not implemented, the international nuclear non-proliferation regime will be undermined, the authority and role of the Security Council challenged, and peace and stability jeopardized both in that region and throughout the world,. That is a scenario from which no one stands to gain. China urges the parties concerned to continue to observe and implement the JCPOA. On that basis, the possibility could be explored for a platform for dialogue that is inclusive and transparent so as to enable each party's concerns to be adequately addressed through talks and consultations.

The question of Palestine must not be marginalized. For more than seven decades, peace and justice have remained elusive in that part of the world. What the international community needs most is not a proposal or an initiative but resolve and action. In order to implement a two-State solution, a new round of peace-promoting efforts must be made with a view to exploring a new mediation mechanism. To that end, China will play its part, and Chinese humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people will continue.

The issue involving Myanmar's Rakhine state cannot be resolved overnight, and steady progress must be made through a three-phase process involving a cessation of violence, the return of the displaced persons and economic development. Myanmar and Bangladesh are inseparable neighbours and could well be inseparable partners. Yesterday, at my meeting with colleagues from Myanmar and Bangladesh and in the presence of Secretary-General Guterres, an agreement was reached between Myanmar and Bangladesh on accelerating the return of the first wave of displaced persons. We believe that Myanmar and Bangladesh are capable of resolving the issue properly through friendly negotiations.

China supports the leading role of the United Nations in coordinating responses to non-traditional security challenges. On the new frontiers of global governance, such as cyberspace and outer space, State sovereignty must be upheld, rules observed and responsibilities honoured. Terrorism, a threat to all societies, can never be justified. Security Council resolutions must be vigorously implemented to counter cyberterrorism, terrorist financing and the spread of radical narratives so as to eliminate the breeding grounds of terrorism.

Development is essential for our world today. We need to address both insufficient development and, more importantly, imbalance in development. There is no one-size-fits-all model. Every country is entitled to explore a particular development path aimed at delivering happiness and security to its people and bringing about a future of confidence and hope for its children. Countries face various questions with regard to development. Such questions could be turned into drivers for reform, and solutions to problems could bring about development. Economic globalization should not be a process whereby some profit and others lose; even less should it result in widening the gap between North and South. It is important that we adapt to the trend of economic globalization and ensure that the process is open, inclusive, balanced and mutually beneficial so that it can deliver benefits to all. International trade is complementary and mutually beneficial in nature. It should not be a zero-sum game in which one side gains at the expense of the others, and no one should be allowed to place their own interest above the interest of others. Protectionism will only be self-defeating, and unilateral moves will hurt everyone.

With regard to friction in trade, China stands for a proper settlement of disagreements based on rules and consensus through dialogue and consultation on an equal footing. China will not be blackmailed or yield to pressure. We have not only taken steps to defend our own legitimate rights and interests but also to uphold the free trade system, international rules and the international order for the benefit of global recovery and the common interests of all countries.

The implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development should be at the top of the agenda of the current session of the General Assembly. We need to incorporate its implementation into Member States' development strategies and pursue innovation-driven, coordinated, green and open development that benefits all. We need to forge closer partnerships for development and pursue international development cooperation, with the United Nations at its centre and North-South cooperation as the main channel, supplemented by South-South cooperation. To meet the challenges of climate change, it is crucial to achieve sustainable development. China hopes to see the conclusion of the negotiations on the implementation guidelines of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, scheduled for the end of this year, with a view to boosting joint efforts for global ecological conservation.

In pursuing our common cause of humankind's development and progress, China has worked in partnership with other countries of the international community. This year marks the fortieth anniversary of China's reform and opening up. Over those 40 years, we have worked hard and forged ahead successfully along a path of socialism with Chinese characteristics. That path has brought fundamental changes to China. In the past 40 years, more than 700 million individuals in the Chinese population have been lifted out of absolute poverty, which accounts for more than 70 per cent of the global totals for the same period. A basic medical insurance system has been set up to cover China's 1.35 billion people, and a social pension network accessible to more than 900 million people has been fully implemented. China has built approximately 25,000 kilometres of high-speed railway. That accounts for two thirds of the global total and helps elevate global infrastructure construction. According to polls conducted by authoritative international polling agencies, China is at the top of global rankings in terms of public satisfaction with its development and public confidence in its future. The path of development that China is pursuing has provided the world with opportunities for shared development. Over the past 40 years, China's foreign trade has averaged an annual growth rate of 14.5 per cent. That has sustained the impetus for global growth and provided the world with a huge Chinese market. We have every confidence that we will maintain that momentum and continue to realize high-quality development. China will accelerate efforts to build an advanced economic system, which will create greater trade opportunities and an even better investment environment for other countries.

China will not reverse course or shut its doors but will rather open its doors even wider to the world. China will not erect market barriers but will expand access to the Chinese market. Of all of the developing countries in the world, China has been the fastest in terms of opening up at a level unparalleled by others. When it comes to overall tariff reduction, China has accomplished more than it committed to when it joined the WTO. The breadth of China's openness in services is close to the average level of developed countries. In November, China will host the first International Import Expo in Shanghai, which will be yet another major step in opening China's market. Countries are welcome to participate actively in it.

The Belt and Road Initiative, proposed by President Xi Jinping, is a public good that China is providing for the world. It has grown into the largest platform for international cooperation. It aims to deliver benefits for all through consultations and cooperation. The Initiative is open, transparent and inclusive. It is based on international rules and laws, and it aims to achieve green, environment-friendly and sustainable development. It is about pursuing common prosperity through greater complementarity among participating countries. By September, more than 130 countries and international organizations will have signed agreements on Belt and Road cooperation with China. Next year, China will host the second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, and we welcome all parties to attend that event.

China is the largest developing country in the world. Strengthening cooperation and solidarity with other developing countries has been and will continue to be a firm strategic priority in China's diplomacy. That choice has been determined by what defines China as a country and by the system and values that China upholds. No matter how much China has increased in strength, and regardless of how the international landscape might change, that strategic priority of China will not change.

The United Nations is the primary platform for advocating for and practising multilateralism. We hope that the current session of the General Assembly will be remembered for its part in upholding multilateralism, world peace and development. We hope that all of us in the international community will support the United Nations in its efforts to play a central role in international affairs, and we call on people of all countries to work together to build a community with a shared future for humankind.

Address by Mr. Charlot Salwai Tabimasmas, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu.

Mr. Charlot Salwai Tabimasmas, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Charlot

Salwai Tabimasmas, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Salwai (Vanuatu) (*spoke in French*): It is an honour for Vanuatu to join other speakers in congratulating you, Madam President, on your accession to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session, and we assure you of our full support. I would also like to express my gratitude to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, for his excellent leadership. Allow me also to commend Secretary-General Guterres and reiterate to him my Government's confidence in his ability to carry out his functions as chief administrator.

I also want to pay tribute to His Excellency the late former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who passed away last month. Mr. Annan will long be remembered for his advocacy for United Nations reform and his commitment to resolving major issues peacefully, given his faith in mediation and dialogue.

The United Nations was founded on the vision that nations can together play an important preventive role in saving successive generations from the scourge of war and restoring confidence in basic human rights. The founders also envisioned an organization that would be a pillar of the world order, in which international peace and security would be guaranteed by international law. Moreover, they envisaged international mechanisms for strengthening social progress and the living conditions of humankind. During these weeks of debate we have an opportunity to assess the progress that has been made over the past seven decades and to discuss areas in which we must do more. The theme of the seventy-third session, "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies", is more fitting than ever as we deliberate on ways to build a stronger, fairer and more transparent United Nations that meets its goals.

The United Nations has made great strides in the past few decades. Extreme poverty has been halved. More girls are enrolled in school than ever before. More women, especially in rural areas, are playing roles with increased responsibility and contributing to the global economy. Similarly, the health of mothers and children has improved significantly. However, those advances are overshadowed by gaps in the Organization, including its continued inability to address the growing list of problems facing humankind, including preventing crises. The Security Council's inability to take decisive action on the Syrian issue is one of many examples. The Government of Vanuatu joins other Governments in recalling that membership in the Security Council is not only a mark of prestige but also entails knowing how to demonstrate strong leadership and assume shared responsibilities to safeguard peace and security in the world.

My Government welcomes the reforms that Secretary-General Guterres is undertaking, prioritizing prevention and the maintenance of peace while making the Organization more coherent and effective through a comprehensive approach. We welcome the efforts to reform the United Nations development system, which require specific changes within the system in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. My Government asks that the United Nations system be flexible and provide opportunities to review and adapt the configuration, role and development services of the many United Nations country teams so as to ensure the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. With reference to an important part of the United Nations reform agenda under way, I would like to draw attention to the pillar of human rights. Without an effective and resilient United Nations-led human rights system within every State, it will be difficult to employ preventive diplomacy. United Nations reform should consider the entire system by aligning peace and security more closely with the pillars of development and human rights.

The Pacific region is committed to strengthening climate resilience as quickly as possible so as to build a strong region. That emerged from the Pacific Islands Forum leaders summit held in Nauru earlier this month. Nature continues to warn us of the imminent dangers to our planet as it approaches a point of no return beyond which our climate systems will no longer be able to cope. Summer heatwaves, huge forest fires, extreme drought and the increasing frequency and scale of weather events have brought the debate on global warming to an indisputable level of importance. I sincerely hope that those warnings will provoke concerted climate action.

As the world's most at-risk country in terms of exposure to natural hazards, according to the World Risk Index of the United Nations University, for Vanuatu climate change continues to be the biggest threat to attaining the national targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and it is currently our worst problem, putting the lives of tens of thousands at risk. If

the level of greenhouse-gas emissions continues to rise relentlessly, we will witness an escalation of the costs associated with the effects of climate change, costs that vulnerable countries such as Vanuatu cannot afford. That will cost us dearly in the future if the international community does not act now.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The Governments of industrialized countries have pledged $100 billion annually by 2020 to finance climate-change mitigation measures in vulnerable countries. But how to attain that goal remains unclear. We call for prioritizing those commitments and putting in place a specific road map for mobilizing and accumulating the promised funds as soon as possible, because climate change is upon us. We also call for more flexible access to climate funding by simplifying validation procedures, so that vulnerable countries can take action and repair the damage caused by climate change.

The Pacific region cannot afford to see the Paris Agreement on Climate Change relegated to the archives of the United Nations. We therefore call for the Paris Agreement's work programme to be completed and made operational at the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Katowice, Poland. Climate change threatens the sustainability of the environment, sustainable development and people's inalienable rights, both now and in the future. It represents a real danger to the survival of future generations and to low-lying countries in the Pacific. The current pledges being made through nationally determined contributions are simply not enough to reverse climate change. The parties to the Paris Agreement must intensify their ambitions to reach the agreed target limit of no more than 1.5° C. For vulnerable countries, especially in our region, a failure to do so would mean even greater exposure to more frequent natural disasters.

As the largest oceanic continent in the world, the Pacific islands region is a vital source of food and income for our population. It is therefore important to implement sustainable policies for the sound management and conservation of the oceans that can ensure a future for our peoples. We welcome opportunities to support our regional efforts to protect our oceans. Vanuatu, like other countries, has unresolved issues regarding the delimitation of its maritime boundaries, which is a very important step in our independence process, and we are determined to resolve those issues. We are committed to and are encouraged by the decision of the Pacific leaders, under the auspices of the Pacific Islands Forum, to bring the negotiations forward with a view to finishing and reporting in 2019.

Vanuatu welcomes the mobilization of the Pacific Islands Forum to establish a new implementation agreement on the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction, which represents an important opportunity for the Pacific region.

Vanuatu maintains its position on denuclearization. Pacific island countries, including our brothers and sisters in the Federated States of Micronesia, continue to be exposed to ongoing threats from radioactive contaminants, including remnants from the Second World War and unexploded ordnance. We therefore call on Member States to join us in ratifying the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Since the inception of the United Nations, some 750 million people from more than 80 former colonies have gained political independence. However, the situation still remains desperate for millions of others aspiring to achieve self-determination. Vanuatu attaches great importance to the work of the Special Committee on Decolonization. The elimination of all forms of colonialism must remain a top priority on the United Nations agenda, in the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations. New Caledonia is on a path to deciding its political destiny through a referendum to be held on 4 November. We appeal to the international community to support the right of the people of New Caledonia to fully participate in that referendum and, above all, to ensure that it takes place in a free and fair manner.

The international community is witnessing violence and human rights abuses against West Papua nationals. We urge the Human Rights Council to investigate those abuses. We also call on our leading counterparts around the world to pay more attention to those inhumane acts and, together with Indonesia, to stop all forms of violence and find common ground with nationalists so as to facilitate the establishment of a process that will allow them to freely express their choice.

According to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, we all have an obligation to work together to lift the economic, trade and financial embargoes imposed on the Republic of Cuba, and

lifting those bans will, among other things, allow the Cuban people to benefit and enjoy their human rights.

My Government's top priority is to ensure national sustainable development for our population by 2030, and we aim to leave no one behind. Our national sustainable development goals are people-oriented, transformative and indivisible in order to strike a balance to the three dimensions of sustainable development. We recognize that the eradication of poverty in all its forms and aspects is an essential condition for sustainable development.

However, my Government cannot bear the immense responsibility of achieving sustainable development in our country alone, a responsibility that is all the more difficult given that we are exposed to increasingly fierce natural disasters. Most recently, my Government had to evacuate some 11,000 people from Ambae Island owing to increased volcanic activity. That poses a financial challenge in the context of an already limited national budget. In that regard, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the development partners who have assisted the Government and the people of Vanuatu in these difficult times and are helping to fund activities that improve the living conditions of our people.

My Government welcomes the opportunity to present Vanuatu's national voluntary review in 2019, and we count on the support and comments of delegations as we share our progress, shortcomings and challenges. In implementing Vanuatu's sustainable development plan, we believe it is essential to create sincere and sustainable partnerships across all sectors and with multiple stakeholders. Vanuatu will emerge from its status as a least-developed country by December 2020. We hope to be able to count on our development partners to assist us with support measures that will enable us to attain developed country status with improved conditions.

I would like to conclude by reiterating that Vanuatu believes and trusts in multilateralism. The United Nations has made this world a better place compared to what it was 70 years ago. While much progress has been made since then, there is still much work ahead of us if we want to maintain the relevance of the United Nations. International problems require appropriate solutions. We need to find ways to act collectively and inclusively in order to solve those problems. We must continually strive to reform the Organization in order to make it more effective so that it meets our expectations today and in the years to come.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Charlot Salwai Tabimasmas, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Allen Michael Chastanet, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Economic Growth, Job Creation, External Affairs and the Public Service of Saint Lucia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Economic Growth, Job Creation, External Affairs and the Public Service of Saint Lucia.

Mr. Allen Michael Chastanet, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Economic Growth, Job Creation, External Affairs and the Public Service of Saint Lucia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Allen Michael Chastanet, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Economic Growth, Job Creation, External Affairs and the Public Service of Saint Lucia, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Chastanet (Saint Lucia): Allow me to begin by congratulating the President on her election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. Her assumption of that important office contributes to our progress in breaking down the barriers of inequality, considering that she is one of only four women to have held that position in 73 years.

The President is the first woman from the Latin America and Caribbean region to have been elected to that post, and we are especially proud of her achievement. Saint Lucia is a staunch advocate for gender equality, as evidenced by the large percentage of Saint Lucian women who hold senior positions in and out of Government, including the four female ministers in my Cabinet. The President can rest assured that she has my delegation's full support at the upcoming session.

I stand before the Assembly today as a leader of a small island developing State (SIDS) that is also a middle-income country. Saint Lucia's engagement in the international system is framed by acronyms that represent designations and categorizations that have been globally accepted. For example, it has become

accepted that SIDS are more vulnerable to natural hazards than other countries. The fact that the resulting damage from natural disasters has a greater overall impact on our economies by virtue of our small size has also become widely accepted. The fact that SIDS that are also middle-income countries face additional challenges because of the assumptions regarding the capabilities of countries carrying that designation has also been acknowledged.

We all know those truths. They are, in fact, self-evident. This Hall has echoed with the words of SIDS and middle-income country leaders, who make plain and clear, year after year, the challenges that we face. Yet global policies, programmes and strategies remain unfairly unaccommodating to those very real and true challenges. The world acknowledges our acronyms, but little or nothing else changes. Saint Lucia remains economically vulnerable to de-risking and the loss of correspondent banking relations. We remain excluded from access to concessionary financing. Our reputations are unfairly tarnished by tax-related labels. We continue to struggle under the weight of international frameworks that do not provide an enabling environment for my country to chart an effective sustainable development path or even to be able to take control of our own destiny.

Despite the fact that the odds remain stacked against us, Saint Lucia must survive and persist. I have an obligation to the people of my country, and so I must find new and innovative ways, regardless of the difficulties, to keep our economy growing and to ensure and enhance environmental and social protections. I do not have the luxury of waiting for the international system to adjust to the special needs of countries like my own, while natural disasters continue to threaten and erode the gains that we have made. In preparation for the coming hurricane season, Saint Lucia has had to spend three times the amount of money that we did last season. In order to meet those costs, we have had to impose new taxes to facilitate our preparedness.

For example, we have introduced a water tax to assist with the de-silting of our dam, a gas tax to assist with road rehabilitation and slope stabilization, and an airport tax to assist with the development of a new terminal, as well as highway and flood mitigation measures around the airport. Saint Lucia is moving forward with an aggressive agenda to reform our institutions and build a more resilient country. We are making difficult decisions and are committed to increasing the productivity of our Government through the use of e-Government tools. I want to acknowledge and thank Estonia for its assistance in that area.

We are building resilience with the support of the United Arab Emirates, which has given us assistance in the form of engineers, and with loans from Taiwan to enable us to rebuild our roads and our airport. I want to thank my citizens, in particular, for their continued support and understanding. We will play our part in the adaptation of our economy, and we will adapt to the new normal.

The President of the World Bank has acknowledged that "good health is the foundation of a country's human capital, and no country can afford low-quality or unsafe health care". The challenge of providing adequate and affordable health care is another area of focus for Saint Lucia. We understand that preventive and affordable health care is critical to the social development of any nation, and more so for a small State with a small population. We are plagued with cases where individuals delay in seeking early medical assistance owing to the high cost, only to be saddled with a serious diagnosis later, thereby increasing the cost burden to the State and the individual.

We have therefore taken steps to address the issue from multiple angles. We are working with partners such as the European Union and the World Bank with the goal of implementing the necessary policies and legislation to give life to a national health-insurance scheme. We are also looking into preventive approaches, such as the imposition of appropriate labelling and a sugar tax, as we grapple with the high prevalence of non-communicable diseases. We are also expanding our after-school programmes, which focus on building healthy lifestyles through physical activity and diet. We are establishing sports academies complete with nutritionists who will be community-based so that their expertise can be shared.

Saint Lucia has worked hard to grow and develop within the context of an international system that acknowledges our existence and needs only theoretically, while any practical and tangible manifestation of those acknowledgements is rarely seen or felt.

We have seen the disastrous impact of natural disasters brought on by the changes in our climate. As I speak, my country is suffering from the ravages of Tropical Storm Kirk, which was on a projected course north of my island but changed direction overnight and

moved directly over Saint Lucia. This morning, Saint Lucia also suffered an earthquake. Early reports indicate damage to our utilities that remain above ground and extensive damage to the agricultural sector. Once again, my heart goes out to our hard-working men and women and the communities that depend on agriculture. But they may rest assured that regardless of the difficulties, we will provide the necessary support to help our people recover as quickly as possible. My thoughts and prayers are also with the Government and the people of Barbados, who have also been affected, as well as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, which now lies in the path of the storm, and Martinique, which suffered an earthquake this morning.

Our resilience as a people and our ability to pick ourselves up should not be used to punish us. I applaud Japan, India and the numerous states within the United States of America that have the capacity to respond effectively to natural disasters. I envy the fact that they have the fiscal and policy space they need to enable them to effectively recover and rebuild, while we, as SIDS, are continually denied that ability.

We are aware that Dominica, the British Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, among others, are still recovering from the storms one year later. Yet little has changed. The Caribbean Community-United Nations High-Level Pledging Conference to support reconstruction efforts in the region following Hurricanes Irma and Maria received pledges of more than $1.3 billion, but there remains a significant gap between the pledges made and the actual amounts that have been disbursed. While those pledges were well intended, we have been let down once again.

My delegation welcomes the initiative to convene a high-level meeting on the challenges of middle-income countries during this seventy-third session of the General Assembly. Saint Lucia has continued to place our concerns about debt sustainability on the global agenda. We have joined the call for the creation of a highly indebted middle-income-country initiative based not only on the urgent need for debt relief, but also on the need to acknowledge and highlight the negative implications of the challenges that middle-income countries face in accessing concessionary financing — so vital to building resilience in our countries. We fear a business-as-usual approach to such a meeting, but remain hopeful that it will provide substantive outcomes with actionable solutions.

Multilateralism is under threat. We have heard the cries from leaders this week. The winds of nationalism that threaten to blow us away from our collective endeavours here at the United Nations are gathering strength. But Saint Lucia believes that it is only within a strong, functional multilateral system that the guarantees of world peace and security can be provided. To paraphrase what Secretary-General António Guterres has said, in a world in which all problems are global, there is no way countries can handle issues by themselves. We need global responses.

The ongoing reform of the United Nations system is critical. The increasingly chaotic world requires an organization that is responsive and effective and that reflects the political and economic reality of a changing world and of all its Member States. We can no longer operate within a framework of ideologies, policies, institutions and patterns of behaviour that were established at a time long past to deal with circumstances long gone.

We must be willing to challenge discrimination and exclusion if we hope to create an equal and just world for all. Every country has a role to play in this global environment. We know that. Saint Lucia joins the other voices calling for an end to the more than half-a-century-old embargo imposed on our neighbour Cuba, and to all restrictions on the rights of the Cuban people, particularly regarding liberty, security and advancement. Similarly, we call for an end to the restrictions on the legitimate aspirations of Taiwan to participate as an observer in key international institutions, such as the World Health Organization, the International Civil Aviation Organization and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). We demand that as much for us as for them.

In our hemisphere, where confrontations and disagreements exist, I reaffirm Saint Lucia's position that all conflicts must be resolved through diplomatic channels. As we work to reform this institution, we must ensure that no one is left behind. We must find the political will and courage to ensure that the United Nations, as currently evolved, not only acknowledges the challenges of its membership but provides adequate solutions for all.

Notwithstanding the myriad challenges that frame our engagement in the international system, Saint Lucia remains committed to the objectives of

multilateralism. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was a triumph of multilateral cooperation, but it is the successful implementation of the Agenda, the fulfilment of the promise of its purpose, that will define the true measure of our collective will to transform and develop as a global community.

It is within that context that Saint Lucia has committed to presenting its voluntary national review of our progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda at the 2019 high-level political forum on sustainable development. I am also pleased to report that Saint Lucia will deposit the required instrument to ratify the Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol before the start of the twenty-fourth session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC. This week, Saint Lucia also reaffirmed its commitment to international law by signing the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

In order to build peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies, SIDS, particularly those that are middle-income countries, must look to a different course of action in order to arrive at a more immediate solution to our development challenges, while we continue to call for changes in the international system. Saint Lucia has recorded two successive years of consistent economic growth. We have increased our tax revenue and are on course to attract record foreign direct investment. We are still competing, having to find new ways to ensure our growth and development, but imagine how much better we could do in building economic and social resilience to further enhance our ability to meet our sustainable development goals and improve the quality of life of our citizens if a fair and just international enabling environment were made available to us.

Let us not forget that we come together here as nations united to build institutions, norms and rules that advance the shared interests of all, not only those of a select few. The enormous challenges of our moment in history require a renewed social contract, based on shared responsibility, and the space to achieve that global compact is right here at the United Nations. Let us draw on the inspiration of Nelson Mandela and his incredible ability to forgive and find solutions for the greater human good.

There is a Buddhist proverb that says, "To know and not to do is not yet to know". If the international community claims to know and accept the special circumstances and vulnerabilities of the SIDS, and does nothing to remedy the systems and frameworks that exacerbate our vulnerability, can the international community say that it really knows? Have we truly accepted the evidence? While the answers to those questions may not be readily available, countries like my own have to chart a development path through this changing and volatile world. It is my hope that as multilateralism evolves, and with it this institution, we will arrive at knowing and at doing what must be done.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Economic Growth, Job Creation, External Affairs and the Public Service of Saint Lucia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Allen Michael Chastanet, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Economic Growth, Job Creation, External Affairs and the Public Service of Saint Lucia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mahathir bin Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Malaysia.

Mr. Mahathir bin Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Mahathir bin Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Mohamad (Malaysia): I would like to join others in congratulating the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. I am confident that with her wisdom and vast experience, this session will achieve the objectives of its theme. I assure her of Malaysia's full support and cooperation towards achieving those noble goals.

Allow me to also pay tribute to her predecessor, Miroslav Lajčák, for his dedication and stewardship in successfully completing the work of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly. I also commend the Secretary-General and the United Nations staff for their tireless efforts in steering and managing the Organization's activities globally.

I particularly want to pay tribute to the late Kofi Annan, who served as the Organization's seventh Secretary-General from 1997 to 2006 and, sadly, passed away in August. Malaysia enjoyed a positive and active engagement with the United Nations during his tenure.

The theme of this seventy-third session of the General Assembly, "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies", remains true to the aspirations of our founding fathers. The theme is most relevant and timely and is especially pertinent in the context of the new Malaysia. The new Government of Malaysia, recently empowered with a strong mandate from its people, is committed to ensuring that every Malaysian has an equitable share in the prosperity and wealth of the nation.

A new Malaysia emerged after the fourteenth general election, in May this year, in which Malaysians decided to change their Government, which had been in power for 61 years, that is, since independence. We did that because the previous Administration indulged in a politics of hatred, racial and religious bigotry and widespread corruption. The process of change was achieved democratically, without violence or loss of life.

Malaysians want a new Malaysia that upholds the principles of fairness, good governance, integrity and the rule of law. They want a Malaysia that is a friend to all and an enemy to none, a Malaysia that remains neutral and non-aligned, a Malaysia that detests and abhors war and violence. They also want a Malaysia that will speak its mind on what is right and wrong, without fear or favour; a new Malaysia that believes in cooperation based on mutual respect and mutual gain; a new Malaysia that offers a partnership based on our "prosper-thy-neighbour" philosophy. We believe in the goodness of cooperation and that prosperous and stable neighbours contribute to our own prosperity and stability.

The new Malaysia will firmly espouse the principles promoted by the United Nations in our international engagements. Those include the principles of truth, human rights, the rule of law, justice, fairness, responsibility and accountability, as well as sustainability. It is within that context that the new Government of Malaysia has pledged to ratify all remaining core United Nations instruments related to the protection of human rights. It will not be easy for us to do because Malaysia is multi-ethnic, multireligious, multicultural and multilingual. We will provide the space and time for all to deliberate and to decide freely based on the principles of democracy.

When I last spoke here, in 2003 (see A/58/PV.11), I lamented how the world had lost its way. I bemoaned the fact that small countries continued to be at the mercy of the powerful. I argued for the need for the developing world to push for reform, enhance capacity-building and diversify the economy. We needed to maintain control of our destiny.

Today, 15 years later, the world has not changed very much. If anything, the world is far worse. Today, the world is in a state of turmoil economically, socially and politically. There is a trade war between the two most powerful nations, and the rest of the world is feeling the pain. Socially, new values are acting to undermine the stability of nations and their people. Freedom has led to the negation of the concept of marriage and families, moral codes and respect for one another.

But the worst turmoil is in the political arena. We see acts of terror everywhere. People are tying bombs to their bodies and blowing themselves up in crowded places. Trucks are driven into holiday crowds. Wars are fought, and people beheaded with short knives. Acts of brutality are broadcast live to the world. Masses of people risk their lives to migrate, only to be denied asylum while being forced to sleep in the open and freeze to death. Thousands starve, and tens of thousands die in cholera epidemics. No one, no country is safe. Security checks inconvenience travellers. There can be no liquids on planes. The slightest suspicion leads to detention and unpleasant questioning.

In order to fight the terrorists, all kinds of security measures, gadgets and equipment are deployed. Big brother is watching, but acts of terror continue. Malaysia fought the bandits and terrorists for independence and defeated them. We used the military, to be sure, but alongside it — and more importantly — we campaigned to win the hearts and minds of the people. The present war against the terrorists will not end until the root causes are found and removed and hearts and minds are won.

What are the root causes? In 1948, Palestinian land was seized to form the State of Israel. The Palestinians were massacred and forced to leave their land. Their homes and farms were seized. They tried to fight a conventional war with help from sympathetic

neighbours; the friends of Israel ensured that that attempt failed. More Palestinian land was seized, and Israeli settlements were built on more and more Palestinian land. The Palestinians themselves are denied access to the settlements built on their land. The Palestinians initially tried to fight with catapults and stones. They were fired on with live bullets and arrested. Thousands are incarcerated. Frustrated and angry, unable to fight a conventional war, the Palestinians resort to what we call terrorism.

The world does not care, even when Israel breaks international laws, seizing ships carrying medicine, food and building materials in international waters. The Palestinians fired ineffective rockets that hurt no one. Massive retaliations were mounted by Israel, rocketing and bombing hospitals, schools and other buildings and killing innocent civilians, including schoolchildren and hospital patients, among others. The world has rewarded Israel, deliberately provoking Palestine by recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

It is the anger and frustration of the Palestinians and their sympathizers that cause them to resort to what we call terrorism, but it is important to acknowledge that any act that terrifies people also constitutes terrorism. States dropping bombs or launching rockets that maim and kill innocent people also terrify people — they are also acts of terrorism.

Malaysia hates terrorism. We will fight it, but we believe that the only way to fight terrorism is to remove the cause. Let the Palestinians return to reclaim their land. Let there be a State of Palestine. Let there be justice and the rule of law. Warring against them will not stop terrorism, nor will out-terrorizing them succeed.

We need to remind ourselves that the United Nations, like the League of Nations before it, was conceived for the noble purpose of ending wars between nations. Wars are about killing people. Modern wars are about mass killings and total destruction countrywide. Civilized nations claim that they abhor killing for any reason. When a man kills, he commits the crime of murder, and the punishment for that may be death.

But wars, as we all know, encourage and legitimize killing. Indeed, such killings are regarded as noble, and the killers are hailed as heroes. They have medals pinned to their chests and statues erected in their honour, with their names mentioned in the history books. There is something wrong with our way of thinking and with our value system. Kill one man and it is murder; kill a million and they become a hero.

However, we persist in believing that conflict between nations can be resolved with war, and because we do so, we must prepare for war. The old adage says, "if you want peace, prepare for war". We are forever preparing for war, inventing more and more destructive weapons. We now have nuclear bombs that are capable of destroying whole cities, but we also now know that the radiation emanating from the explosion will affect even the country that uses the bomb. A nuclear war would destroy the world.

That fear has caused the countries of Europe and North America to maintain peace for over 70 years. However, that is not the case for other countries. Wars in the other countries can help test the new weapons being invented, and so the arms exporters sell them to warring countries. We see their arms in wars fought between smaller nations. Those are not world wars, but they are no less destructive. Hundreds of thousands of people have been killed, whole countries devastated, and nations bankrupted because of fantastic new weapons.

Such wars give handsome dividends to the arms manufacturers and traders. The arms business is now the largest business in the world. They profit shamelessly from the deaths and destruction that they cause. Indeed, so-called peace-loving countries often promote that shameful business. Today's weapons cost millions. Fighter jets cost about $100 million each, and maintaining them can cost tens of millions. Yet poorer countries are persuaded to buy them, even if they cannot afford them. They are told that their neighbours or their enemies have them. It is therefore imperative that they, too, have such weapons. While their people starve and suffer from all kinds of deprivation, a huge percentage of the budget of many countries is allocated to the purchase of modern arms. The fact that their buyers may never have to use them does not bother the purveyors at all.

In Myanmar, Muslims in Rakhine state are being murdered and their homes torched. Millions of refugees have been forced to flee, to drown in the high seas or live in makeshift huts without water or food and with the most primitive sanitation. Yet the authorities of Myanmar, including a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, deny that that is happening. I believe in non-interference in the internal affairs of nations, but is the world supposed to watch massacres being carried out and do nothing?

Nations are independent, but does that independence mean they have a right to massacre their own people?

On the other hand, in terms of trade, nations are no longer independent. Free trade means that there is no protection for the infant industries in small countries. They must abandon tariff restrictions and open their countries to invasion by the products of the rich and powerful. Yet the simple products of the poor are subjected to clever barriers so that they cannot penetrate the market of the rich. Malaysian palm oil is labelled as harmful to health, and it is claimed that the palm oil estates are destroying animal habitats. Food products of the rich are declared to be free of palm oil. Now palm diesel is also condemned because the producers decimate virgin jungles. The caring people making those claims forget that their boycott deprives hundreds of thousands of people of jobs and a decent life. We in Malaysia care for the environment. Some 48 per cent of our country remains virgin jungle. Can our detractors claim the same about their own countries?

Malaysia is committed to sustainable development. We have taken steps, for example by improving production methods, in order to ensure that our palm oil production is sustainable. By December 2019, the Malaysian Sustainable Palm Oil standard will become mandatory. That will ensure that every drop of palm oil produced in Malaysia will be certified as sustainable by 2020.

All around the world, we observe a dangerous trend towards inward-looking nationalism. We see Governments pandering to populism, retreating from international collaboration and closing their borders to the free movement of people, goods and services, even as they talk of a borderless world and free trade. While globalization has indeed brought us some benefits, the effects have been proven to threaten the independence of small nations. We cannot even talk or move around without having our voices and movements recorded and often used against us. Data on everyone is being captured and traded by powerful nations and their corporations.

Malaysia lauds the United Nations for its endeavours to end poverty and protect our planet and for its efforts to try to ensure that everyone enjoys peace and prosperity. However, I would like to mention the need for reform in the Organization. Five countries, on the basis of their victories in wars fought more than 70 years ago, must not be allowed to claim to have a right to hold the world to ransom forever. They cannot take the moral high ground, preaching democracy and regime change in the countries of the world while they deny democracy in this Organization.

I have suggested that the vetoing of a draft resolution in the Security Council should require that at least two permanent members, supported by three non-permanent members of the Council, vote against it. The General Assembly should then uphold the decision with a simple majority. I will not say any more.

I must admit that the world without the United Nations would be disastrous. We need the United Nations, and we need to sustain it with sufficient funds. No one should threaten it with financial deprivation.

After 15 years' absence and at 93 years old, I now return to this rostrum with the burdensome task of bringing the voice and hopes of the new Malaysia to the world stage. The people of Malaysia, proud of their recent democratic achievement, have high hopes that around the world we will see peace, progress and prosperity. For that, we look to the United Nations to hear our plea.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Malaysia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mahathir bin Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Antoni Martí Petit, Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra.

Mr. Antoni Martí Petit, Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Antoni Martí Petit, Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Martí Petit (Andorra) (*spoke in Catalan; English text provided by the delegation*): For the people of Andorra, 2018 is a year of double celebration, globally and locally speaking. On 28 July, the Principality of Andorra celebrated 25 years since its entry into the United Nations, and on 10 December, it will be 70

years since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

As I have already mentioned, those two events have both a global and a local significance — what some people call "glocal". In fact, the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights has a global dimension for Andorra, as well as for the other countries that make up the international community. But it also has strong local roots, because fundamental rights have been respected in Andorra since time immemorial. It is therefore no wonder that the Andorran Constitution expressly states that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is in force in Andorra.

That is why our country wanted to play an active part in the Stand Up for Human Rights campaign, emphasizing the importance of the dissemination of human rights in the area of education. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, with whom I have had the honour of working in the Ibero-American community in recent years, knows that she can count on Andorra to ensure that the Declaration made on 10 December 1948 remains as valid and as strong as ever. As I have already said, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was already part of Andorran positive law even before Andorra became a Member of the United Nations.

I would now like us to reflect on what the world was like 25 years ago, when Andorra joined the Organization as a full Member. The year 1993 was a time of hope for everyone. The fall of the Iron Curtain and the end of the Cold War gave way to a wave of unprecedented democratization. Never had so many people in the world lived under democracy as during the final years of the twentieth and the early years of the twenty-first century. Human rights were strengthened, economies grew and inequalities were gradually diminishing. They were years of peace, cooperation and multilateralism, as well as respect, understanding and dialogue among cultures and religions. Around us, on the old continent, they were years of optimism in the long and fruitful process of European construction.

Today, we all remember that period with a certain degree of nostalgia. We were reminded of that this summer during the meaningful homages paid to the former Secretary-General the late Kofi Annan, who did so much for peace and multilateralism throughout the end of the past century and the beginning of this millennium. We saw it again just this week during the Peace Summit dedicated to Nelson Mandela (see A/73/PV.4 *et seq.*), who was, without a doubt, one of the key figures of that historic moment.

Twenty-five years on, many of the hopes of 1993 have become blurred and, despite some of the milestones reached, we have slipped back. The prestigious non-governmental organization Freedom House has noted, year after year, a constant decline in world democracy since 2006. In its most recent report, we read that in 2017, only 4 of every 10 people live in free countries. That slow decline in democratic regimes has been accompanied by an increase in inequality, intolerance and extremism. Even in the most established democracies, we increasingly hear the voices of people who have suffered discrimination in silence for many years — women, persons with disabilities and victims of sexual abuse or abuse of any kind. All of that shows us that our optimism 25 years ago was rather naive.

However, despite all the disappointments and all the faults, we must still defend the international order that was created by the United Nations just after the end of the Second World War. We must defend that order because it is based on three principles that are as elemental as they are universal. All of us have the same rights; what affects all of us must be decided by all of us; and any conflict must be solved peacefully and lawfully. When I say "all of us", I am referring to everybody, individually, within a representative democracy and to all countries, on an equal footing, here at the General Assembly.

Representative democracy and multilateralism share a set of common values and it is therefore not surprising that they should end up in crisis at the same time. In my view, the democratic multilateral order is threatened by the two extremes of populism and technocracy. In the face of complex problems, populism proposes solutions that are simple but that are not solutions, because they end up creating new problems and calling into question democratic principles and values. In the face of complex problems, technocracy proposes solutions that are as complex as they are elitist and that rather than being inclusive, generate inequality and bypass many people. Populism is fed by the disappointment of people who have been left to one side and have suffered from exclusion, a lack of understanding and inequality.

In recent years, we have heard time and time again that the world is struggling between opening

up and closing down, between multilateralism and unilateralism, between cooperation and protectionism. But perhaps the mistake lies in wishing to present things in that way. All too often, defenders of the multilateral order and globalization believe that we have made no errors and that it is other people who are mistaken, without seeing that globalization has created antibodies, some harmful and some not — because perhaps not every kind of globalization is good.

In the face of that dialectic between opening up and closing down, we should not seek confrontation but look for balance. There should be a balance between cosmopolitanism and being deeply rooted in tradition, because there are advantages to both. All too often we have focused on the risks of protectionism, populism and closing down, without realizing that there is also another risk — that of elitist and inhumane globalization, which is not very inclusive, if at all. Very often the solutions that we have found to major international issues — whether geopolitical, economic or social — are solutions that do not consider people and that go against one of the themes of the United Nations, the call to leave no one behind.

I therefore view very positively the theme chosen by the President of the General Assembly, Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés — with whom we also share the Ibero-American community — of "Making the United Nations relevant to all people". And that means building peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies.

The action of the United Nations, and by extension of the entire international community, must be inclusive and focused on the real problems of people. If we do not do that, we would be persevering in our mistakes; we would be reinforcing an image of international institutions that are difficult to understand and far removed from the concerns of the people, and we would be opening the door to populism even wider. That is why Andorra wants to participate in a particularly active way in promoting and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Goals are focused on the specific, tangible needs of the world population. They are major global objectives that have local applications and impact, and if they are attained, they will reinforce the bonds that are so necessary between people and institutions.

Andorra presented its first voluntary national review on the Sustainable Development Goals at the high-level political forum on sustainable development of the Economic and Social Council last July. As explained in the review, our Government has been working for some time on classifying various of its political endeavours according to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda. We have also launched a campaign to involve the education community, civil society and private companies in promoting and achieving the various Goals. That is a way of opening up and bringing the United Nations and its agenda closer to the people.

In our opinion, innovation and the new technologies play a very important role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. That is why we need a cross-cutting alliance between the public and the private sectors so that we can put technological progress in the service of the 2030 Agenda.

We have assessed our performance on six Sustainable Development Goals linked to the environment. They are water and sanitation; clean, accessible energy; sustainable cities; responsible consumption and production; the protection of life on Earth and the fight against climate change. Various actions introduced by my Government in recent years are aimed at those goals — the ongoing improvement of water and air quality; a comprehensive plan of energy transition that has enabled us to reduce our dependence on outside energy sources by promoting renewable energy; direct grants for renewing buildings using energy-efficient criteria and so on. All of those actions are designed to enable us to comply with the 2030 Agenda.

Andorra has also emphasized two more goals, measures to combat climate change and high-quality education, because they are two things with which Andorran society fully identifies. We therefore champion the validity of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which many countries signed here in New York in April 2016, and we insist that the international community must comply with the agreements and commitments made in Paris in December 2015. We reiterated that view in Paris last December at the One Planet Summit, promoted by the Secretary-General and the President of the French Republic and Co-Prince of Andorra, Mr. Emmanuel Macron. Andorra is working to fulfil the commitments of the Paris Agreement and strongly encourages the rest of the international community to do the same.

As far as quality education is concerned, Andorra is proud of having a rich, diverse, all-embracing education

system that is available to all citizens. It is a system in which families can opt for Andorran, Spanish or French education at no additional cost. It prepares our young people to become citizens of a global world while remaining deeply rooted in their own identity. That is perhaps why a great many Andorran international cooperation efforts focus on the area of education. With the financial support of the Government, several Andorran non-governmental organizations are carrying out projects to promote training and opportunities for street children in Bolivia, educate young girls in Honduras and provide schooling for poor children in Madagascar.

In choosing the theme for this session of the General Assembly — "Global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies" — our President has spoken about leadership and shared responsibilities. That seems to me to be a key matter. If we allow the action of the United Nations, and by extension that of the entire international community, to move away from people's real needs, we would be losing leadership.

In the face of the increase in populism and extremism, political leaders often feel they are misunderstood. However, misunderstood leaders do not exist, because a misunderstood leader is not a leader. A leader who does not connect with the people is not a leader. The United Nations cannot afford the luxury of disconnecting from the problems, needs, expectations and hopes of the citizens of this globalized world. Andorra therefore offers its support to the plans to reform the architecture of the United Nations that Secretary-General Guterres and his team are carrying out. More effective management of resources is essential, particularly with a management focused on people. That is crucial.

In this final part of my statement I would like to tell a personal anecdote. Seven and a half years ago, I took on the responsibility of leading the Government of the Principality of Andorra. The ballot boxes bestowed that responsibility on me again in March 2015. This will therefore be the last time that I address the General Assembly.

In Andorra, the entry of the men and women of my generation into political life coincided with the approval of the 1993 Constitution and with the recognition of our country as a full member of the international community. I was elected a Member of Parliament in the same year that Andorra became a part of the United Nations. I am therefore a child of that time of optimism that I mentioned at the beginning, a time when democracy was expanding, economies were growing, and multilateral institutions were becoming stronger. However, it was also up to me and the people of my generation to take on the responsibilities of Government in a time of crisis — economic crisis, social crisis and a crisis in values — at a time when what we believed to be solid and resistant was proving to be fragile and unstable.

Over time, we have grown accustomed to living with that awareness of fragility and instability. When all is said and done, maybe that is not so bad. Our predecessors, the previous generations of Andorrans, were acutely aware of the fragility of the foundations on which our very old institutions stood. If I compare that sense with the spirit of optimism that prevailed 25 years ago, the symbol of our times, the symbol of this current moment, is precisely that awareness of the fragility of the economy, the institutions, the worldwide geopolitical order, the environment and the planet as a whole. Everything seems to be much more fragile and in much greater danger now.

Moving from that awareness of fragility, we have found the strength to undertake actions that had been sitting on the table for years and to launch reforms that had been pending for decades — seeking a more open, transparent and cooperative economy, constructing a more inclusive and all-embracing society, finding sustainable models of growth and preserving the institutions and values that have been handed down through history, adapting them and making them useful for the people of today. Out of necessity we have made a virtue and out of weakness we have found strength so that the younger generations can take up the reins of their times and do so with the same optimism that we had 25 years ago. We must work right through to the last moment so that our disappointments can be transformed into their hope, so that our mistakes give rise to their ability to prevent them from happening again, and so that our good choices serve as the foundations on which they can continue to build peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies.

All of us, the older and the younger generations, should always be aware that everything that happens in the global area has local repercussions and that all of the actions that we undertake at the local level contribute to shaping the global society. Hopefully, it is one that

is fairer in nature, a global society in which everybody feels that they are listened to and included. That is a global society to which Andorra — because of its small size, but also because of its serenity, which prevails as a result of centuries of peaceful existence — is fully committed. The Secretary-General is aware of that, as are the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session and all our friends in the international community.

Politicians move on. Countries and institutions remain. I am sure that in the future Member States will be able to continue to count on the Principality of Andorra to assist in building a fairer, safer world. That is our task.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Antoni Martí Petit, Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Itaukei Affairs, Sugar Industry and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Fiji

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister and Minister for Itaukei Affairs, Sugar Industry and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Fiji.

Mr. Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister and Minister for Itaukei Affairs, Sugar Industry and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Fiji, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister and Minister for Itaukei Affairs, Sugar Industry and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Fiji, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Bainimarama (Fiji): *Bula*, and a very good day to all. Allow me to congratulate the President on her assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session.

Every year brings fresh challenges and new crises, even as the crises of last year and the year before await some resolution, or even some respite. This Organization, the United Nations, is continually challenged to stand between parties in conflict, ease the suffering of refugees and migrants and continue its work to build a more peaceful, just and equal world. The Fijian people have always been proud of our nation's full engagement with the United Nations. We have been a willing and energetic presence in peacekeeping efforts around the world, and we are now proudly putting every ounce of energy that we have into the fight to save this planet and its people — all of us — from a catastrophic warming of our climate.

Fiji will soon celebrate national elections for the second time since our return to democracy. I say "celebrate" with a purpose, because truly free elections are the very starting point for democracy and freedom. If the people cannot choose their Government freely, their other freedoms are always in jeopardy.

I am proud of what we have accomplished in our Fijian democracy. The shell of democracy that once existed has now been pierced, bringing the Fijian people into a genuinely inclusive society in which minority rights are respected and all citizens are equal, in name and in fact. That is the great promise of the 2013 Fijian Constitution, which has been the beacon for our progress through its vast array of political and socioeconomic protections for every Fijian.

Today and forever, in Fiji we make and will make no distinctions based on ethnicity, social status or religion, and we enforce and will enforce our laws guaranteeing equality. We have reinforced our democracy by passing laws to empower girls and women and protect them from violence. We have reformed our education system so that it provides real opportunities for all Fijians, regardless of income, gender or whether they live in the capital or on the most remote islands.

This year we achieved a literacy level of over 90 per cent. More than 90 per cent of girls in Fiji complete 15 years of secondary education and just under 90 per cent of our boys do the same. We are building our future on that firm foundation of education.

We have also reformed our welfare programmes not only to provide a stronger safety net but also to create greater opportunities for the most vulnerable in our society. While we provide free medicines and subsidized electricity, we also award grants to micro-businesses as a way of lifting people out of poverty and rewarding and encouraging self-reliance and entrepreneurship.

That approach goes beyond mere Government programmes for the disadvantaged. It is based on the fundamental principle that the socioeconomic rights of all Fijians must be protected. They include the right to a high-quality education, the right to receive treatment and medication when our people are ill, the right to decent housing, the right to clean water and electricity, and the right to affordable and accessible transportation.

We have also strengthened our independent institutions — our judiciary and the independent commissions that protect consumers, fight corruption, provide legal assistance, advocate and promote human rights and carry out many Government activities that must be free of political considerations. I may be disappointed when my Government loses a case in court, but those defeats are signs of strong, independent institutions, which we must support and reinforce. They serve to strengthen the people's belief that everyone in Fiji can get justice. If people believe in the courts, they will go to the courts to settle their disputes and trust the courts to adjudicate without fear or favour.

There is no doubt that the Fijian people have a strong and abiding love for freedom. We want to live freely, and we see freedom, democracy and, perhaps most important of all, tolerance as powerful forces for peace in the world. It is with that clearly demonstrated vocation for personal freedom, tolerance and social justice that Fiji is running as a candidate for membership in the Human Rights Council during this session of the General Assembly. We have thought hard about human rights and have taken actions to be a better nation — a nation that encourages respect for the dignity of every person. We look forward to bringing that point of view to the critical work of the Council.

Fiji looks to a future free of racism, nepotism and privilege, a future where the rights of all persons are guaranteed and enforced by a robust constitutional framework that reaffirms and protects civil and political rights, as well as social, cultural and economic rights.

Our value to the Human Rights Council is also underpinned by our long experience in peacekeeping. It was exactly 40 years ago that Fiji first participated in United Nations peacekeeping. Over those 40 years, which have seen Fijians serving in Africa, the Sinai, East Timor and throughout the Middle East, we have come to identify ourselves as a peacekeeping nation, which makes us proud. That is something that we offer to the global community and our fellow human beings.

Moreover, over those 40 years we have witnessed at first hand the way intolerance embraces and leads to repression, violence and mass migration. We have experienced intolerance in Fiji, which was an ugly experience that corroded our trust in each other and our sense of who we are as a people. We must remember that experience so that we do not repeat it, and we will never stop working to ensure that it stays in our past.

I am proud to stand before the Assembly and report that Fiji is in its ninth year of strong economic growth. I believe that that is due in no small part to the democratization that has taken root in our country and is flourishing. Democracy is based on a belief in the people and the belief that everyone is capable of great things if they are given equal opportunity. When people see that they have opportunities, can obtain justice, speak their minds and be heard, and that their hard work will be rewarded, they invest their money and their sweat in their future and in greater possibilities for their children. They stay at home and contribute rather than emigrating, and they feel free to let their hopes and ambitions soar. That is what drives a thriving economy.

However, that optimism must be nurtured and supported through intelligent Government action. In Fiji we have reformed the tax laws to make them simpler and more just. In that connection, we have begun to rigorously enforce our tax laws to ease the burden on those who have little and to ensure that whoever should pay pays a fair share. People who take risks and mount successful businesses should enjoy the fruits of their hard work, but they must also do their part to sustain the nation. Tax cheating is an offence against the people, and we will root it out and penalize it wherever it exists.

We have also reformed our State enterprises to make them profitable and efficient. The people of Fiji and the employees of those companies have been the main beneficiaries, because better capitalization and better management has produced better services, increased investments and higher wages.

We also see small and medium-sized enterprises as important ways of promoting growth and lifting people out of poverty. I am proud to say that my Government has given grants worth $32.4 million to small and micro-enterprises, and we have been rewarded with explosive growth and extraordinary innovation in that sector. Free people need an economic structure that

serves them and makes them optimistic. That is one of the basic pillars of democracy.

Fiji is coming to the end of its presidency of the twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP-23), part of the United Nations ongoing climate negotiations among the nations of the world, but the struggle to fight global warming and end the degradation of our oceans will continue to be Fiji's highest priority. The many disastrous effects of climate change that we are seeing in the South Pacific and around the world are well documented. The same can be said of the enormous stresses on our oceans arising from acidification, overfishing, warming and plastic refuse. The time to debate those facts is long past.

As the Fijian Prime Minister, I have met thousands of Fijian women, men and children every year who have suffered from the latest wave of climate-related impacts, such as cyclones, flooding, prolonged droughts and steadily rising seas. I have met with farmers whose crops have been washed away, teachers and students who have lost their schools, and families whose homes have been destroyed. They want their Prime Minister to demand that the world take action on their behalf.

The commitments that we have all made through our nationally determined contributions fall woefully short of the mark. They simply will not get us to the goal agreed in the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, that of reducing the rate of global warming to well below the 2°C target, let alone the more ambitious target of 1.5°C. What matters now is action. Fiji will press for more action on climate change and ocean health in every forum that it is a part of. We cannot simply wait for the rest of the world to come around, because the effects of climate change are already bearing down on us.

We are already taking steps to boost our resilience. Fiji has begun a project to improve access to sustainable water supplies and sewerage services for approximately 270,000 Fijians. We will provide cyclone insurance coverage for low-income households. We are relocating entire villages and communities to escape the rising seas. Following the cyclones, we are rebuilding our infrastructure to a higher and far more resilient standard. We are working to protect communities that face unacceptably high risks of flooding. Fiji also became the first emerging market to issue a sovereign green bond to fund such activities.

However, no Government can combat climate change alone. The challenge is simply too great. That is why, from the beginning of Fiji's presidency of COP-23, I have sought to build a grand coalition of Governments, the private sector, labour forces, religious groups and civil society to take initiatives and come up with ideas and solutions, both great and small.

I am confident that I speak for all Fijians and Pacific islanders when I say that I tend to lose patience with national leaders who proclaim their deep concern over climate change and then do little or nothing to lead their nations onto a more ambitious path for reducing greenhouse-gas emissions. Leaders who ignore that threat and give their people new coal-fired power plants instead of a better future for their children are either tragically short-sighted or simply engaging in a most cynical form of betrayal. And their people — all people — will bear the burden.

The world has embraced the Pacific tradition of *talanoa*, a tradition of open and honest dialogue. That will help to raise our collective ambition. But ambition without action and without a plan is just talk. The Talanoa Dialogue will reach a crescendo in Katowice, Poland, at COP-24. We cannot let Katowice fail. Katowice must not became another Copenhagen.

We are not only calling on others to act, we are also leading from the front. Earlier this week I announced that Fiji will commit to significantly raising its nationally determined contribution. Fiji will be a net-zero greenhouse-gas-emission country by 2050. Fiji is proud to have launched the Ocean Pathway Partnership with the Government of Sweden. We know that the interaction of ocean ecology and climate change runs deep. We cannot attempt to solve the crisis of one without confronting the crisis of the other. Our oceans are suffering from the stress of human activities, which goes beyond climate change and includes pollution, overfishing and acidification.

I want to draw the world's serious attention to the need to help developing nations, particularly the most disadvantaged and vulnerable, to overcome climate and oceans stresses. We need access to finance and practical solutions, and we need the United Nations to help us get there. It has been an honour for Fiji, and for me personally, to lead the United Nations efforts on climate change this year. I am proud of what we have accomplished. The world has never needed the United Nations more. The existential problem of climate

change requires us to work together, the challenge of mobilizing finance for climate resilience requires us to work together, and more complex and more globalized conflicts require us to work together.

Fiji is firmly committed to the United Nations. We need the United Nations to be at its best if we are to have any chance of overcoming the grave challenges that Fiji and the world now confront.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Itaukei Affairs, Sugar Industry and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Fiji for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister and Minister for Itaukei Affairs, Sugar Industry and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Fiji, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by His Excellency Mr. Alexis Tsipras, Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic.

Mr. Alexis Tsipras, Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Alexis Tsipras, Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Tsipras (Greece) (*spoke in Greek; interpretation provided by the delegation*): Three years ago, when I first had the honour of addressing the General Assembly in a plenary meeting (see A/70/PV.22), I emphasized that Greece was at the forefront of three overlapping international crises. Those crises have had a severe impact on Greek society, its economy and the country's diplomatic role in the region.

Greece was the country most hard hit by the eurozone crisis, losing 25 per cent of its gross domestic product, reaching more than 27 per cent unemployment and significant levels of poverty. Greece was also the European country that, from a per-capita point of view, carried the heaviest burden of the refugee crisis, as over 1.2 million people entered its islands within a period of a few months. Greece also found itself at the centre of a worsening crisis of destabilization in the Balkans and the eastern Mediterranean, with nationalism growing rapidly.

The question for me at the time of my statement in 2015, as it was for all of us, was whether the United Nations, the international community and our international institutions would be able to help overcome those common challenges through collective solutions. The question was whether the European Union (EU), the European Central Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization and the World Bank would guide us to sustainable growth, help decrease poverty and promote more balanced global trade. The question was whether the EU, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration would help us to effectively and humanely resolve the refugee and migrant crisis. The question was whether the United Nations, the EU, NATO and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe would promote peace and stability, combat international terrorism and resolve conflicts in my region and many others.

In the years that followed, however, what came to the fore was a very big "trust deficit" vis-à-vis international and national institutions, as the Secretary-General called it a few days ago (see A/73/PV.6). In that context, nationalist forces became stronger and stronger and finally succeeded in reframing the question. Their aggressive stance highlighted the fact that the question is not whether we can count on international institutions to solve common problems on the basis of common values, but whether those problems and values are common at all. Their logic in confronting those crises was simple and based on a not-in-my-backyard attitude.

For example, in dealing with the eurozone crisis, those forces called for a "Grexit" and the need to make an example of Greece. In dealing with the refugee crisis, they supported the unilateral closure of borders along the Balkan route as a solution, demanded push-backs into the sea and called for a small Schengen area that excluded front-line EU countries. In dealing with crises in the broader region, the solutions that they proposed were also simplistic — sanctions and preventive or humanitarian wars, and, when those led to a dead end, disengagement from the region and the containment of problems to avoid any spillover.

In Greece, we dynamically confronted not only the challenges themselves, but also the ideas and policies I have mentioned about the problems. Not only did we

manage to stay standing, overcoming those difficulties, but beyond that we also became part of the solution, rather than part of the problem, in Europe and in the broader region. We did that without succumbing to the directives of countries, forces and institutions that disregarded the will of the Greek people in favour of their own economic or geopolitical interests and without resorting to nationalist politics that would lead to a departure from the eurozone, an escalation of tension with neighbours and a violation of human rights and international law.

First, as regards the economy, we remained in the eurozone but carried out tough negotiations for an economic programme that centred on the necessary structural reforms and not on the perpetuation of punitive and exhausting austerity. At the same time, we protected labour rights and are now establishing a respectable minimum wage, while guaranteeing fiscal space to support the welfare State and those who are most vulnerable.

Today we have left behind economic programmes that only perpetuated recession. Our growth rate has been 2.1 per cent this year, and will be going on 2.5 per cent next year. Unemployment has fallen by 8 per cent, tourism has exceeded 34 million visits per year and we are overachieving with regard to the size of budget surpluses, while investors' interest is growing steadily. Greece is becoming a regional energy, commercial and transport hub, while also changing the energy map and developing its strategic assets.

Secondly, with regard to the refugee crisis, we have had to deal with the highest refugee flows in post-war European history. We did that while respecting international law and human rights. However, at the same time, we supported the difficult, but necessary, EU-Turkey statement. We did not give in to nationalistic and xenophobic voices that called for push-backs into the sea or a superficial asylum process aimed at rejecting everyone. However, we also did not hesitate to accept that those who do not need international protection must return to their countries of origin where they can be safe.

We severely criticized those European countries that rejected their responsibility to assume their fair share of the burden — countries that call for unity when it comes to having rights but see things differently when it comes to fulfilling responsibilities. The people of Greece, despite their difficulties, opened their arms to incoming migrants, showing the world what solidarity means. Deaths in the Aegean Sea have nearly reached zero, and migrant flows have fallen radically.

Thirdly, concerning the security crisis, we confronted grave challenges caused by rapid destabilization, the strengthening of nationalism and increasing tensions in a region in which we already had stark differences with neighbouring countries. In that geopolitical context, Greece retained a policy of protecting its sovereign rights and interests. However, at the same time, it chose to become, together with Cyprus, the most important European pillar of peace, security and stability in the region.

We have established dynamic trilateral schemes of cooperation with Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine. We also clearly presented the message that dialogue, cooperation and respect for international law are the only ways to foster stable bilateral relations and strengthen the prospects for the region. Moreover, we remained committed to that policy in our difficult relations with Turkey, refusing again and again to give in to nationalism and the escalation of tensions. That position allowed us to show the great potential for our relations in the areas of security, migration, energy and the economy, while also making clear the need for respect for international law in the Aegean and the eastern Mediterranean.

In that context, we clearly expressed and continue to express our full support for a just and viable solution to the Cyprus issue, on the basis of United Nations decisions. The solution will be based on the framework of the Secretary-General and our important Crans-Montana negotiations.

Moreover, we are actively promoting stability and economic growth in the Balkans through a policy of resolving issues with our neighbours, which unlocks their potential to join the EU and other international organizations of their choice. One example would be our dialogue with Albania, but, most importantly, the Prespes agreement with our immediate northern neighbour. That agreement is important not only for the region, but also as a model for the peaceful resolution of differences. Moreover, the agreement did not come about through the stronger party's imposition of its will and interests on the other, but through a mutually acceptable arrangement that preserves the dignity of both sides.

I think that today it is high time that we, as an international community, reframed the questions for our future, because we have heard many important statements. The dilemma is not one of patriotism versus globalism. It is rather whether we will leave our world in a vicious circle of nationalist reaction and regression, which history has taught us leads to tragedy, or create the conditions for collective, progressive solutions that respect the national and popular sovereignty of each and every country.

Modern, democratic, patriotic politics cannot mean passively accepting the directives of transnational elites who are accountable to no one. Modern, democratic, patriotic politics cannot accept as a given an international order that reproduces inequalities of power and wealth, protects the rights of some to have enormous trade surpluses at the expense of others, or allows some countries to impose their will and interests on others in the name of common values no less. That is our position with regard to the eurozone, to humanitarian wars in the region and to our differences with our neighbours.

On the other hand, modern, democratic, patriotic politics has to be able to deal with twenty-first-century global and regional challenges, challenges that are common by their very nature and can only be dealt with collectively, on the basis of shared values. We believe that modern, democratic, patriotic politics must be based on collective arrangements and guarantees that preserve and promote peace, stability, sustainable growth and human rights, and that they should not be based on a logic of unilateralism, nationalism and strengthening the powerful over the weak.

That means making sure that international organizations, including financial ones, become more accountable and respond to the actual needs of States and citizens. It means supporting the Secretary-General's vision for United Nations reform, as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the coming global compact on migration, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Iran nuclear deal, despite all of its weaknesses.

It means finding a political solution in Syria on the basis of an inclusive political dialogue under United Nations auspices, and revitalizing the Middle East peace process towards a comprehensive solution that responds to Israel's just demand for security and the Palestinians' just demand for a State on the basis of the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

It means promoting valuable dialogue among European and Euro-Atlantic institutions and member States with Russia, on the basis of mutual respect and with the goal of dealing with international challenges and regional crises. It means promoting peace and development in Africa, supporting the countries that carry the biggest burden in hosting refugees, such as Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan, and confronting the root causes of migration. It means supporting positive steps for a diplomatic solution to denuclearization on the Korean peninsula.

Lastly, particularly as we celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it means advancing the human rights agenda, which Greece has done, after all, by granting citizenship to second-generation immigrants who were born and raised in our country, by establishing the legal recognition of gender identity and the institutionalization of civil partnership and by deepening the rights of the Muslim minority.

This year we are celebrating the 100th anniversary of the birth of Nelson Mandela, who once said that tasks always seem impossible until they are done. For the last eight years my country has been hit hard by three global crises. We decisively confronted the logic that countries affected by global challenges must deal with them alone. Today, although Greece still faces big challenges in its economy, migration management and diplomacy, it is again standing on its feet, bringing solutions to the region. That would not have happened without a politics that asserts popular and national sovereignty but also commits to collective solutions aimed at peace, stability and preserving human rights.

The challenge for our time is to once again find the proper balance as an international community, confronting international forces that spread fear and hatred and that in the end seek to scale back the progress we have made. That is a genuinely modern, democratic and patriotic choice — one whose aim will be to ensure that our countries progress and prosper, rather than become pitted against each other.

In conclusion, the civilization of my country leaves no space for doubting the choice that we will support. I assure the Assembly that the Greek people will be standing once again, and as always, on the right side of history.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Alexis Tsipras, Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, Prime Minister, Minister for Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister for Finance and Economic Development of the Republic of Mauritius

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister, Minister for Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister for Finance and Economic Development of the Republic of Mauritius.

Mr. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, Prime Minister, Minister for Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister for Finance and Economic Development of the Republic of Mauritius, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, Prime Minister, Minister for Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister for Finance and Economic Development of the Republic of Mauritius, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Jugnauth (Mauritius): Let me join other leaders in paying special tribute to the late Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations. The legacy left by that great son of Africa will forever remain carved in the history of the United Nations.

I warmly congratulate Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her election as the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session, and I want to assure her of our full support in her work. I also thank Mr. Miroslav Lajčák for his dedicated and able leadership, relentless commitment to multilateralism and continued engagement with Member States during his presidency.

The year 2018 is a special year for Mauritius, as it marks the fiftieth anniversary of our independence. We also celebrate, with immense pride and honour, 50 years of membership in this body. The theme for this session, "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies", is both apt and timely.

We are living in troubled times that are marked by uncertainty and complex threats to the peace, stability and sustainability of our planet. Increased international tensions, intractable conflicts, expanding pockets of poverty throughout the world, growing inequalities, the deterioration of the oceans, climate change, violent extremism and terrorism, nationalism, cyberthreats, escalating militarization and forced migration are only some of the perils that endanger global peace and security. These challenges cannot be overcome without greater cooperation, global leadership and shared responsibilities.

Ms. Scott (Namibia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We wholeheartedly welcome the reform process to make the United Nations fit for purpose, closer to and more consonant with the people it serves and better equipped to bring about the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, so that no one, irrespective of race or gender, is left behind. My Government remains fully committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In that regard, Mauritius will present its voluntary national review at the 2019 high-level political forum on sustainable development next July.

The SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway remains a valid road map for us to measure how much progress has been achieved in addressing the challenges and difficulties faced by small island developing States (SIDS), including climate change. We welcome the holding of the mid-term review of the SAMOA Pathway next September, and we call on all stakeholders to participate at the highest level, in order to assist SIDS in strengthening their resilience.

The stark effects of climate change are being felt all around the world. As we have seen in California, the Carolinas, the Philippines, China, Europe and elsewhere, the frequency of extreme weather events demonstrates that climate change can affect every country on every continent. Hurricanes, floods, droughts and wildfires are becoming deadlier, and weather patterns more severe. These disasters are sounding the alarm. Without a renewed global commitment to undertaking ambitious efforts aimed at combating climate change and adapting to its effects, we will fail to meet the

targets of the Paris Agreement and endanger our planet, as well as our own survival.

We cannot dissociate the climate from our oceans. Our planet's future also depends on our ability to further protect the oceans and increase their ability to act as a buffer against climate change. We need global leadership and enhanced multilateral cooperation to safeguard the ocean and its role as the natural weather regulator of our planet.

As a large ocean State that respects the rule of law and international law, Mauritius has taken the lead in the western Indian Ocean region in combating piracy and other transnational organized crimes and in keeping its territory and surrounding areas safe. As Chair of the Indian Ocean Commission, Mauritius co-hosted with the Commission a ministerial conference on maritime security in April to coordinate actions to fight transnational organized crimes, such as drug trafficking, piracy and human trafficking. In doing so, we have consolidated our engagement with the United Nations system, in particular, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Department of Political Affairs, with which we recently signed a memorandum of understanding to assist the Indian Ocean region in fighting these security threats and challenges.

We are equally concerned about the situation in the Middle East, where the scourge of violence and war continues to claim innocent lives. Peace in that region will remain elusive as long as the international community does not live up to its legal and moral responsibilities to uphold international law. Mauritius therefore reiterates its call for renewed and genuine international efforts in favour of negotiations towards the speedy realization of a two-State solution, with an independent and viable Palestine existing side by side and at peace with the State of Israel. While we wait for this to happen, it is extremely important that the suffering of the people, especially women and children, is alleviated through renewed and increased international support.

Despite all the current efforts, terrorism remains a painful reality, claiming numerous lives daily and threatening world peace and development. It is urgent that we build consensus on global counter-terrorism efforts and reinforce multilateral cooperation in fighting this scourge. Indeed, we must pay attention to why individuals are attracted to violent extremist groups. We believe firmly that the creation of open, equitable, inclusive and pluralist societies, based on the full respect of human rights and with education and economic opportunities for all, represents the most effective way to ending violent extremism.

In that same vein, we need to reinforce global non-proliferation regimes. The continued existence of nuclear arsenals and the threat of a nuclear disaster represents a major impediment to the maintenance of peace and security. We must also remain vigilant with regard to the cyberthreats that endanger our national security. As highlighted in the new disarmament agenda that the Secretary-General presented in May, we must create secure physical and cyberzones in space, on land and on the seas, and we need to do whatever is necessary to make our planet a safe place for all.

Drug trafficking and unregulated drug consumption have the potential to destroy the future of our young people. We are all too well aware of how drugs undermine sustainable human development and the stability of countries and whole regions. My Government remains determined to fight drug trafficking. In that regard, our commission of inquiry on drug trafficking, set up to inquire on all aspects of drug trafficking in Mauritius, has recently submitted its findings. I have set up a ministerial committee to look into its recommendations, which include strengthening the existing institutional framework and reviewing the relevant legislation. To address the evolving challenges of drugs, my country has committed to the Global Call to Action on the World Drug Problem. More than ever, we need closer cooperation to address this scourge.

We must be careful not to undermine the multilateral system, as it has served the community of nations well. The United Nations was created to bring States together. It also established conditions under which justice and respect for the law can be maintained and strengthened.

Conscious of the responsibility of belonging to the Assembly, my country made a pledge at its admission in 1968 to uphold the great ideals that are enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. We gave the assurance that we would bring our contribution, however modest it might be, to shaping the destiny of a better world.

As a responsible member of this community of nations, Mauritius has remained true to that pledge. Today I reaffirm my country's continued commitment to the ideals and values of the Organization, its respect for international law and faith in international partnership

so as to build a safer and more prosperous world. It is with this commitment that Mauritius subscribes to the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, and we look forward to its adoption in Marrakech in December.

In the same spirit of upholding the Charter of the United Nations, and based on their commitment to the international rule of law, in June 2017 member States of the Group of African States introduced draft resolution A/71/L.73, requesting an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965. At the heart of this request for an advisory opinion is the issue of decolonization, a matter of international public order under the Charter and a central element of the work of the United Nations and General Assembly. To date, the decolonization of Mauritius remains incomplete, thanks to the unlawful excision of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius prior to its accession to independence.

The hearings at the Court have been completed, and the judges will now deliberate on a matter that has raised important issues relating to decolonization and human rights, particularly the right to self-determination of the people of Mauritius and the plight of Mauritians of Chagossian origin who were forcibly removed from the Chagos Archipelago. The advisory opinion will also further clarify and strengthen the rule of law at the international level at a time when such strengthening is greatly needed. I want to take this opportunity to express my Government's appreciation to all the member States of the African Union that have actively participated in the written and oral proceedings of the International Court of Justice relating to this matter.

The United Nations is and will always be at the centre of all action for sustainable development, peace and security. While we applaud the three-pronged reform of the United Nations led by the Secretary-General, considerable resources will be required to match this ambition. We therefore appeal to all stakeholders to be generous in supporting the reform by providing adequate resources on a predictable basis. We also appeal for a special consideration of Africa's needs and priorities in the restructuring of the peace and security architecture.

We commend the efforts of the Secretary-General aimed at enhancing the framework of cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union, which is so vital to sustained peace and development on the continent. Africa's growth is showing promising signs of rebounding, and several countries are already undergoing positive transitions. Elections in Africa during the last several years demonstrate that African countries have strengthened their democracies, while ensuring a peaceful transition of power. We welcomed the signing of a historical peace agreement between Ethiopia and Eritrea ending two decades of tension that followed years of open conflict, causing the loss of thousands of lives. The improved political climate, reconciliation efforts and inclusive participation rights herald a new age of governance that deserves to be supported by the international community.

One aspect of United Nations reform where we find progress wanting is in the collective aspiration for a strengthened and more legitimate Security Council that reflects today's reality. We once again call for reform of the Security Council and repeat our plea for the start of a text-based negotiation. We all agree that an equitable representation of Africa on the Security Council will not only redress a gross historical injustice but also render the Council more democratic and representative. We also support India's legitimate aspiration for a permanent seat in an enlarged Security Council and a non-permanent seat for small island developing States.

Four days ago we celebrated the memory and legacy of one of Africa's most illustrious leaders, Nelson Mandela (see A/73/PV.4 *et seq.*). As world leaders, we would benefit from being inspired by the words and actions of Mandela, especially when he said:

> "What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead."

Together we can make that difference.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister, Minister for Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister for Finance and Economic Development of the Republic of Mauritius for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, Prime Minister, Minister for Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister for Finance and Economic Development

of the Republic of Mauritius, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Duško Marković, Prime Minister of Montenegro

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Montenegro.

Mr. Duško Marković, Prime Minister of Montenegro, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Duško Marković, Prime Minister of Montenegro, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Marković (Montenegro) (*spoke in Montenegrin; interpretation provided by the delegation*): It is my pleasure to address the General Assembly on behalf of Montenegro, one of the youngest members of the United Nations, which, since the restoration of its statehood 12 years ago, has clearly and unequivocally confirmed its commitment to joint action within the United Nations system.

At the outset, allow me to congratulate Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés of Ecuador on her election as the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session, and to wish her success in carrying out the responsibilities and duties of the post. I also want to thank the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session, Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, for his outstanding leadership and contribution to strengthening the role of the General Assembly and stepping up dialogue with Member States. I congratulate him on another job well done, and express gratitude for the lasting friendship he has shown towards Montenegro.

I welcome the theme chosen for the general debate of the seventy-third session. I firmly believe that in these challenging times concerted action and shared responsibility for peaceful, just and sustainable societies are the right and only way towards achieving our goal of making the United Nations relevant to all people on the planet.

Given the complex situations and challenges that the world is facing, the grave divisions for numerous reasons, the catastrophic consequences of the spread of terrorism and violent extremism, as well as climate change, there is no question that only through joint action can we succeed in resolving conflicts and preventing the further suffering of innocent people. The historic multilateral agreements that we have made in recent times show what we can do through joint action. These agreements, primarily the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, envisage our common future and confirm that multilateralism is not an option but the only effective tool in our toolbox.

For the full implementation of the adopted agreements, reforming the United Nations and strengthening its central role in multilateralism are more necessary than ever. This seventy-third session is therefore of paramount importance for restoring confidence in the United Nations. Indeed, notwithstanding the sometimes justified criticism directed at the Organization, it is capable of achieving the noble objectives for which it was founded. It cannot be said that these lofty goals have been achieved in today's world, but neither do we have to hide that fact. We must look the problem in the eye and assume our share of responsibility for the state of today's — and tomorrow's — world.

Montenegro strongly supports the United Nations reform process. I am confident that the issue of fragmentation within the Organization can be settled by strengthening the linkages among all three pillars of action and by promoting greater transparency, efficiency and accountability. I believe that the implementation of the complex reform agenda, coupled with the strong leadership of Secretary-General Guterres, will result in a more efficient Organization and contribute to reducing suffering throughout the world and ensuring common peace, security and prosperity.

I would like to remind the General Assembly of Montenegro's views, in a nutshell, on some of the key topics on the agenda of this session of the Assembly. First of all, Montenegro is strongly committed to the policy underlying the Sustainable Development Goals and the work being done to achieve those Goals, which complement the reforms that we have undertaken in our European integration process. Furthermore, although its share in global emissions and population statistics is small, Montenegro is committed to the implementation of the Paris Climate Agreement through the responsible and sustainable management of its development potential. Montenegro welcomes the initiative of the Secretary-General to hold a climate change summit in 2019.

In terms of finding solutions to conflicts all around the world, we are aware that the international community often fails to prevent crime and the suffering of many. In addition to what we have learned from the long-standing conflict in Syria, the findings of the commission of inquiry into human rights violations in Myanmar also warn of the importance of prevention and addressing the causes of instability in a timely manner. It is our moral and political responsibility to prevent impunity for the perpetrators of the crimes committed. In this regard, the role of the Security Council, the International Criminal Court and other criminal tribunals is crucial.

Montenegro deplores the stalemate in settling the long-standing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the lack of progress in resolving the worsening humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. Today we call on all parties to uphold international law and refrain from unilateral actions that weaken confidence and make it difficult to reach a mutually acceptable peace agreement. We strongly support the resumption of negotiations and the use of mediation in striving to reach a peaceful solution.

Conflicts in Syria, Yemen, Libya and other countries, as well as the long-standing Palestinian-Israeli conflict, require an immediate end to violence, respect for international law on the part of all parties to the conflict and peaceful settlements achieved through diplomatic means as soon as possible. In order to eradicate terrorism and violent extremism, we must step up efforts to strengthen the implementation of the prevention pillar of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. The focus of our activities must be on the integration of vulnerable and marginalized groups and care for young people as the main stakeholders in a better future.

We strongly support global efforts aimed at disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. I am certain that through the consistent application of the relevant treaties on nuclear disarmament and arms control, we can achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world. We therefore support the activities of the United States of America, the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea aimed at ensuring the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

I will now touch on two very important and intertwined aspects of today's world: human rights and humanitarian challenges.

Any violation of human rights poses a threat to democracy and the rule of law and represents a step towards possible conflict. At a time when we are commemorating the seventieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the twenty-fifth of the adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and the twentieth of the adoption of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, we are witnessing an increasing number of examples of grave human rights violations around the world. It is unacceptable that we remain silent about this fact. In addressing these situations, we acknowledge the important role of the Human Rights Council and the need for it to be more efficient and effective in its functions in order to build on the results achieved so far. A strong and determined commitment to taking a progressive approach to human rights is necessary, as is improving our record in adhering to the highest standards at all levels.

With respect to the protection and promotion of human rights at the national level, significant progress has been made in the protection of women, children and the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender populations, and in the integration of marginalized groups. We aim to strengthen and expand our national human rights dialogue, which should contribute to improved adherence to international standards. Montenegro's commitment to the issue of gender equality and the fight against violence against women has been reaffirmed by our chairmanship of the Executive Board of UN-Women. We strongly advocate greater roles for women as leaders, high-level decision-makers and stakeholders in conflict prevention, resolution and reconciliation.

Although humanitarian challenges are on the rise, I want to emphasize the importance of two key multilateral agreements that have arisen under the auspices of the United Nations, the global compacts on migration and refugees. The adoption of the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration will contribute to the improved management of international migration in all dimensions, to the benefit of all States and communities, including migrants. Our Government is working in all areas to better regulate migration processes and is doing everything it can to enable the admission of migrants and refugees in accordance with international standards in this area, while taking into account its own national capacities. Bearing in mind our experience in admitting a large number of refugees during the Balkan conflicts in the 1990s, we have helped

to develop the global compact on refugees, which we believe will contribute to the international community's joint action to regulate the mass movement of refugees and provide support to destination countries.

In the past 12 years, since the restoration of our independence, we have made rapid progress in the State-building process on the basis of lofty democratic values. Our results are not just a product of political pragmatism but a vision of a modern Montenegro geared to the stability and prosperity of its citizens.

Montenegro is a new member of NATO, having joined it last year. We are aware of the necessity for a safe and secure environment and are committed to dealing with the issues of global security and the preservation and enhancement of common values within both NATO and United Nations peacekeeping missions. Membership in NATO has given us a strong incentive to further strengthen the rule of law based on the highest democratic values.

At the same time, we are vigorously implementing economic reforms that have resulted in a high economic growth rate of more than 4.5 per cent last year and in the first half of this year. The reforms are based on principles of sustainable development that will secure higher living standards for our people in the longer term.

At the moment, Montenegro is a front runner among the Western Balkan States engaged in the process of joining the European Union. Among other things, we have earned this position because multinational and multireligious harmony has been a historical feature of our country and our greatest value. We are committed to strengthening institutions and making them sustainable, and are determined to win the fight against organized crime and corruption.

Before concluding, I would like to draw the Assembly's attention to the current situation in my region. The Western Balkans is now a better place to live than 20 or 30 years ago, owing to the efforts of the international community and the Governments of the countries of the region. We in Montenegro believe that there is no better future for our citizens than being integrated into the European Union. We are also confident that this choice is also natural for Europe. In our view, European values are the best — indeed, the only — answer to growing nationalism and populism. However, in order to achieve the goal of furthering European values, decisive action must be taken based on a clear vision of wholeness, stability and strength in every corner of Europe.

Montenegro will remain committed to promoting regional stability and cooperation and developing good neighbourly relations. In that regard, we welcome the signing of the historic agreement between Macedonia and Greece, which contributes to broadening the European and Euro-Atlantic perspective of the region. We hope for the successful implementation of the agreement reached, which will be conducive to creating an environment favourable to the further overall development of the region.

We also welcome the negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina. We believe that in the coming period it will result in the achievement of a lasting agreement and the full normalization of relations, which is in the interest of both the region and Europe.

Montenegro will continue to be a responsible partner as it works together with the United Nations. Through its membership in the organs and agencies of the United Nations, it will contribute to United Nations efforts aimed at addressing global challenges. In addition to its membership in and chairing of the Executive Board of UN-Women, Montenegro has submitted its candidacy for membership in the Economic and Social Council for the period from 2020 to 2022, the Human Rights Council for the period from 2022 to 2024 and the Security Council for a term from 2026 to 2027.

We believe that we will gain the support and confidence of the States Members of the United Nations in those bodies, which will be an opportunity to contribute to stronger and more effective United Nations action. The key interests of our countries are shared — they are greater peace, security and prosperity for our citizens. In this respect, the United Nations must continue to play a strong role.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Montenegro for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Duško Marković, Prime Minister of Montenegro, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Hun Sen (Cambodia) (*spoke in Khmer; English text provided by the delegation*): My participation in the general debate of the General Assembly at this session is taking place in a context in which the Cambodian nation is enjoying dividends of peace, stability and rapid development that are unprecedented in its modern history. Cambodia is an outstanding example of a war-torn country that has succeeded in completely transforming itself in a way that it is proud of.

Once infamous for its killing fields in a region made unstable by armed conflicts and dangerous landmines, Cambodia, formerly an economically backward country mired in poverty and food insecurity, now enjoys full peace. It has become a popular tourist destination in South-East Asia and a food exporter. It also stands out for its achievements in poverty reduction and its improvements across all social indicators. Cambodia is recognized as one of the world's fastest-growing economies, having recently successfully graduated from low-income to lower-middle-income status, owing to its high economic growth, at around 7 per cent per annum over the past two decades.

Despite being notorious for its history of armed struggle for power and multiple changes of Government, Cambodia is now governed by the rule of law and firmly respects multiparty liberal democracy, with regular, free and fair elections that enable its people to choose their country's leadership. In Cambodia's general election for electing members of the sixth National Assembly in July, nearly 7 million Cambodians, or 83.02 per cent of registered voters, cast their votes and freely expressed their political choices without coercion, threat or violence. Twenty registered political parties ran in the election, which clearly demonstrated the legitimacy of our pluralist politics and reflected what was described by thousands of domestic and international observers in Cambodia as a stable democratic process in the form of a free, fair and credible election.

By their votes, Cambodians reaffirmed their desire for peace, stability and long-lasting sustainable development. Indeed, neither the free choice of the Cambodian people nor the legitimate result of the election is a subject for question or debate. In some outside circles, however, where an ambition to interfere in the domestic affairs of Cambodia has been nourished, questions about the quality and integrity of our election process have been raised in statements that attack the outcome of the election. Such actions are a serious assault on the will of the Cambodian people.

I would like to draw the attention of all States Members of the United Nations to the vitality of the Charter of the United Nations. We must all give the proper respect to that crucial document by avoiding interference in or damage or disruption to the sovereignty of independent States. We regretfully have to highlight the fact that the issue of human rights nowadays has become the way some powerful nations strive to impose civilization on other nations, or, according to their operating standards, as a pretext for interfering in the name of protecting political rights. As a result, the imposition of unilateral sanctions has become a popular weapon that powerful nations use to manage their international politics, which are completely driven by their geopolitical agendas.

That is nothing more than the use of brutal force by a particular State to impose its will on other sovereign States. In a world where the eras of imperialism and colonialism are now behind us, we have to acknowledge that not all nations in the General Assembly should follow the governing model of any particular country. Large countries should not attempt to impose their administrative systems on small countries because those small countries are sovereign and have legitimate aspirations to upholding their own identities. Today, when interdependence is key, the old-style coercive mindset needs to be put to rest. Together, both large and small countries must respect one another and uphold the rules of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

The world is currently facing severe instability. Threats to peace are emerging in many forms, and more intensively than anything we have witnessed in

the past 25 years. We all live in a world of fragility, unpredictability and complicated changes, as challenges come from various fronts, with an increase in the number of persistent conflicts and unprecedented humanitarian crises.

We are deeply concerned about the tensions created in diplomatic circles by a first-world super-Power and the conflicts that are happening in many places thanks to its interference. We are also deeply concerned about the hasty decisions made by that super-Power to withdraw from major international agreements. Such unilateral actions, which threaten the legitimacy of the international legal order, have undermined State-to-State relations and caused tension in the international community. Yet what exerts the most pressure is the direct attack on multilateralism.

Undoubtedly, in our globalized world, all things are interconnected. If we begin to endorse protectionist policies, unilateralism and trade wars, we are closing the door on trade and investment opportunities, which, for many decades, have brought prosperity to all our countries, both small and large. Eventually, we will all become poorer, our economies will decline, financial capital will shrink, and our ability to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and address the challenges caused by climate change will be seriously affected. Those factors will make poor countries suffer prolonged poverty, making us increasingly vulnerable to the dangerous ideology of terrorism and extremism and to regional conflicts.

As a small economy, Cambodia believes in the value of rules-based international cooperation. We have all prospered because of globalization. We are therefore convinced that global trade should not be hindered by the imposition of unilateral tariffs. Rather, it should be enhanced and supported through the adherence to policies conducive to trade and investment, as well as through special preferential treatment for developing countries. Stability and diversification in the financial sector need to be further encouraged to promote innovation and development.

All in all, we must jointly maintain and strengthen multilateralism. In fact, peace without development is not sustainable. In that context, the Sustainable Development Goals play a pivotal role in guiding peoples towards prosperity. Cambodia views the SDGs as an important opportunity for mobilizing efforts aimed at reducing poverty, as well as sustainable and inclusive development. The Royal Government of Cambodia will soon approve the Cambodia Sustainable Development Goals, which have been fully adapted to the local level. We will use those goals to shape our medium- and long-term policies and plans for our country.

Moreover, conflict prevention is a precondition for long-lasting peace. United Nations peacekeeping forces play a vital leading role in such efforts. As a result, Cambodia greatly welcomes the vision of Secretary-General António Guterres with respect to peacebuilding and peacekeeping, particularly his ongoing attention to conflict prevention. Cambodia has been a consistent supporter of the United Nations peace and security architectures. For instance, for the past 12 years, Cambodia has sent thousands of Blue Helmet forces to join peacekeeping missions under the umbrella of the United Nations. However, peacekeeping today is facing unprecedented challenges, since non-State actors are waging wars of rebellion against our peacekeeping forces. Those wars have claimed many lives and caused much injury. We are strongly indebted to the sacrifices made by the United Nations peacekeeping heroes. Indeed, their sacrifice, including the ultimate example — death — has only increased our commitment to further contributing to the great cause of peace.

Another severe and complicated threat to long-lasting peace is terrorism. It has torn apart communities, worsened conflicts and undermined the stability of whole regions. Currently, the battles against terrorism have become even more complex and sophisticated, since terrorists are turning to cyberspace to launch their malevolent operations. The cross-border nature of terrorism requires that we build multilateral cooperation with concerted coordination, including countermeasures and preventive measures.

Addressing climate change is another key element for the success of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which requires the urgent and focused attention of the global community. The fundamentals for action on climate change are undoubtedly contained in the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. In that spirit, Cambodia will provide full support to the Secretary-General in organizing the climate summit next year so as to foster the inspiration needed to further address climate change.

Lastly, I would like to emphasize that Cambodia fully supports the global leadership of the United

Nations and commits to implementing its shared responsibility to build a peaceful and equitable society that enjoys sustainable and inclusive development.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia for the statement he has just made.

Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The statements delivered during this session's general debate confirm that international relations are now being conducted in a complex and controversial period of history.

Today, we are all witnessing two opposing trends collide. On the one hand, we see the strengthening of polycentric principles of world order, the steady development of new centres of economic growth and peoples' aspirations to preserve their sovereignty and choose development models that are consistent with their national, cultural and religious identities. On the other hand, we see the desire of a number of Western States to retain their self-proclaimed status as world leaders and slow the irreversible and objective process of establishing multipolarity. To that end, they do not hesitate to use every possible method, including political blackmail, economic pressure and brute force.

Such illegal actions devalue the international law that underpins the post-war world order. We hear statements trumpeted that not only call into question the legal validity of international treaties, but also prioritize self-serving unilateral approaches over decisions made within the United Nations. We are seeing an assault by belligerent revisionism on the modern system of international law. There have been attacks on the basic principles of the Middle East peace process, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on the Iranian nuclear programme, commitments under the framework of the World Trade Organization, the multilateral Paris Agreement on Climate Change and many more.

At the same time, our Western colleagues continue to seek to replace the supremacy of law in world affairs with some kind of so-called rules-based order. Those rules themselves are invented depending on whatever is politically expedient and are a reflection of double standards. Baseless accusations of interference in the internal affairs of various countries are being made alongside overt attempts to undermine and topple democratically elected Governments. Efforts are being made to draw some countries into military alliances that are designed to further specific agendas against the will of the peoples of those countries, while other States are threatened with punishment for their free choice of partners and allies. It is telling that aggressive attacks on international institutions are being accompanied by attempts to privatize their secretariat structures and grant them the rights of intergovernmental bodies in the hope of manipulating them later.

The shrinking space for constructive international cooperation, escalating confrontations, a growing overall lack of predictability, and a substantially higher risk of spontaneous conflicts all affect the work of this global Organization. The international community has to pay a high price for the parochial, self-serving ambitions of a small group of countries. The collective mechanisms for responding to common security challenges have stalled. Diplomacy and a culture of negotiation and compromise are increasingly replaced by dictates and unilateral extraterritorial restrictions effected without the consent of the Security Council. Such measures, which have already been applied to dozens of countries, are ineffective as well as illegal, as demonstrated by the more than half-century of the United States blockade of Cuba, which has been condemned by the entire international community.

Once again, however, the lessons are not being drawn from history. The number of those who want to hand down verdicts without bothering with charges or trials is not getting any smaller. Today assumptions in the spirit of the notorious "highly likely" approach seem to provide sufficient grounds for some of our Western colleagues to make accusations against anyone they want to. We have already been through that, and we well remember how often spurious pretexts have been used to justify interventions and unleash wars, as was the case in Yugoslavia in 1999, Iraq in 2003 and Libya in 2011. The same methods are being used in Syria today. On 14 April, missile strikes were launched against Syria on a completely invented pretext, just hours before international inspectors were expected to arrive at the site of an incident that had been staged. This is a warning against any further provocations

by terrorists and their patrons involving the use of chemical weapons, which would be unacceptable.

The conflict in Syria has already lasted seven years. The failed attempt to effect regime change, which was orchestrated from outside and relied on extremists, nearly resulted in the country's disintegration and the emergence of a terrorist caliphate in its place. Russia's energetic action, in response to the request of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and supported by diplomatic efforts in the context of the Astana process, helped prevent that devastating scenario. The Syrian National Dialogue Congress, initiated by Russia, Iran and Turkey in Sochi in January, established the conditions for a political settlement in line with Security Council resolution 2254 (2015), and the basis for the intra-Syrian constitutional committee now being established in Geneva. Its agenda includes the restoration of ruined infrastructure in order to facilitate the return of millions of refugees to their homes. Assistance in addressing those issues in the interest of all Syrians, without double standards, must become a priority for international efforts and the activities of United Nations agencies.

Despite the complexity of the situation in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Libya, we must not lose sight of the long-standing Palestinian question. A just and equitable solution to that issue is crucial to improving the situation throughout the Middle East. I want to warn against any unilateral approaches in this area or attempts to monopolize this peace process. Today, as never before, the international community should consolidate its efforts with the aim of restarting talks on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. Russia will continue to do its utmost to facilitate the process, including within the Middle East Quartet and in cooperation with the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Mutually acceptable agreements must ensure the peaceful and safe coexistence of the two States of Israel and Palestine.

Here at the United Nations, which was created on the basis of lessons learned from the Second World War, we must all think about a future in which the repetition of past mistakes should have no place. This year marks the eightieth anniversary of the notorious Munich agreement crowning the criminal policy of appeasement of the Third Reich, a sad example of the catastrophic consequences that can result from national egotism, disregard for international law and attempts to solve problems at others' expense.

Regrettably, in a number of countries today not only has the vaccine against the Nazi plague been weakened, but a rising campaign to rewrite history and whitewash war criminals and their associates is emerging. In our view, the campaigns being waged in a number of countries to demolish monuments to the liberators of Europe are an outrage. We call on the Assembly to support the draft of this year's versin of the annual resolution on the inadmissibility of glorification of the Nazis.

The growth of radical nationalism and neo-fascism in Ukraine, where criminals who fought under Waffen-SS banners have been declared heroes, is one of the main factors in the protracted intra-Ukrainian conflict. The only way to settle that conflict is to ensure the comprehensive and consistent implementation in good faith of the Minsk package of measures, approved unanimously by the Security Council in its resolution 2202 (2015). We support the activities of the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and are ready to provide its monitors with United Nations protection.

However, instead of implementing the Minsk agreements and engaging in dialogue with Donetsk and Luhansk, Kyiv continues to harbour the illusion that it may be able to put occupying forces in Donbas with the support of the West and is increasingly threatening to resort to military options. The sponsors of the current Kyiv authorities must bring their clients to their senses, make them lift the blockade of Donbas and end discrimination against ethnic minorities throughout Ukraine.

In Kosovo, the international military presence authorized by the Security Council is being transformed into a United States military base, and Kosovo armed forces are being created. The agreements between Belgrade and Pristina brokered by the European Union are not being implemented. Russia calls on the parties to engage in dialogue in accordance with the principles of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) and will support a decision that would be acceptable for Serbia. In general, we urge that the Balkans not be once again transformed into an arena for confrontation or declared to be someone's particular patrimony. The peoples of the Balkans must not be forced to face a false choice,

and we must prevent new dividing lines from emerging in the region.

We need to shape an architecture of equal and indivisible security elsewhere in the world, including the Asia-Pacific region. We welcome the positive developments on the Korean peninsula following the logic of the Russian-Chinese road map. It is important to encourage that process, which should be based on continuing the rapprochement between the parties and on promoting the practical implementation of the important arrangements arrived at by Pyongyang and Seoul through the Security Council. We will continue to work to launch a multilateral process aimed at establishing a robust mechanism for peace and security in North-East Asia as soon as possible.

The denuclearization of the Korean peninsula is among the tasks before the international community in the key security area of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Regrettably, serious obstacles to that track continue to pile up. The unilateral withdrawal by the United States from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, in violation of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015), and despite Iran's full compliance with its obligations, came on top of the lack of progress in the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. We will do everything possible to preserve the deal approved by the Security Council.

We are seeing increasingly negative trends in the activities of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) whereby the West is attempting to transform the Technical Secretariat into an instrument for punishing undesirable Governments, which risks compromising the OPCW's independent professional status, the universality o. the Chemical Weapons Convention and the exclusive prerogatives of the Security Council. Those and other problems in the area of non-proliferation were discussed in detail in the Security Council on 26 September (see S/PV.8362), convened at a very timely moment by the United States presidency.

We firmly believe that any problems or concerns that arise in international relations should be addressed through a substantive dialogue. If there are any bones of contention, we should come together around the negotiating table, engage in talks, present facts, heed the our partners' counterarguments and seek a balance of interests.

In the past couple of years, the debate on abuses in cyberspace has become more intense. I would like to draw attention to the fact that it was Russia that initiated discussion of international information-security issues at the United Nations 20 years ago. Against the backdrop of recent developments, it is becoming ever more urgent that under the auspices of the United Nations we should develop global rules for the responsible behaviour of States in cyberspace, including the principles of the non-use of force, non-interference in internal affairs and respect for State sovereignty. We intend to introduce a draft resolution to that effect in the First Committee. We also believe that it is important to start work on a convention on cybercrime, and we envisage holding the relevant discussions in the Third Committee.

It is more essential than ever to seek mutually acceptable agreements and the mutual consideration of interests in the areas of global trade and economic relations, which today are being subjected to an unprecedented degree of politicization. The values of free trade are being held hostage to trade wars and other forms of unfair competition.

Russia has consistently promoted a philosophy of shared economic development, as enshrined in the Greater Eurasian Partnership initiative launched by President Vladimir Putin, a large-scale project open to all Asian and European States regardless of their membership in other integration associations. If consistently implemented, it could help to develop a the space for extensive economic cooperation in Eurasia. In the long term, it could lay the foundations for a renewed continental security architecture fit for the realities of the twenty-first century.

Russia will continue to do its utmost to build a world based on law, truth and justice, and we are not alone in that aspiration. Together with us, our allies and partners in the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Eurasian Economic Community, the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) group and an overwhelming majority of other countries are advocating for the democratization of all aspects of international affairs and in the interests of all States, without exception. The West should also heed that voice, which is becoming

more and more evident in the activities of the Group of 20.

In today's turbulent circumstances, the growing relevance of the United Nations — the only existing forum for overcoming differences and coordinating the activities of the international community — is an objective reality. Cooperation, with a view to arriving at broadly acceptable solutions, was a priority built into the foundations of the United Nations from the very start. Today we must not fail to live up to the high goals and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and its dedication by the drafters to future generations.

We should recall the art of negotiation in order to be worthy of their legacy. Many of today's problems can be solved only on a basis of equality and mutual respect. Dictates and coercion, hallmarks of the era of colonialism, should once and for all be filed away in the archives or, better yet, consigned to the dustbin of history.

Some great statesmen of the past have bequeathed to us many words of wisdom that have come to be aphorisms. Let me quote just one, from President Harry Truman: "The responsibility of the great States is to serve and not to dominate the world".

I hope that a culture of mutually respectful dialogue will finally prevail. Russia will do everything it can to achieve that.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Heiko Maas, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Mr. Maas (Germany) (*spoke in German; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): A veteran of United Nations diplomacy recently told me that every session of the General Assembly has its own crisis to discuss, its own major topic. So what is the big issue in 2018? Syria? North Korea? The Middle East? Or the dramatic global refugee situation, from the Mediterranean to Venezuela?

If we take a step back, those disparate conflicts reveal a bigger picture and a distinct pattern. It becomes clear that we are indeed facing a crisis — a crisis of multilateralism. And that crisis makes conflicts around the world appear insoluble. When I say that they "appear" insoluble, that reflects the faith that we Germans have in multilateralism. Germany's post-war success story is also multilateralism's success story.

Europe, which was scarred by war and destruction, was able to integrate in freedom, security and prosperity thanks to our neighbours' courage in seeking reconciliation. The United States also played a crucial role in Europe's reconstruction. The fact that Europe was then able to become the closest partner of the United Nations is a triumph of multilateralism. We believe in the United Nations because international cooperation changed our own fate for the better.

Europe has proved to the world that multilateralism and sovereignty are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, in a world faced with immense global problems, we can safeguard sovereignty only by working together.

Three words, "we the peoples", express both our goal and how we will achieve it. That is why the founders of the United Nations chose those as the opening words of the Charter of the United Nations. They wanted to spell out that we need to work together to find solutions. They wanted to leave no doubt as to whom the United Nations and we as representatives of States serve — the people.

The Charter's promises are addressed to the people, who are assured that their freedom and dignity will be defended at the United Nations in New York. But does a boy in Idlib, who lives in constant fear of the next air strike, feel that? How does a girl in Africa feel when her life expectancy at birth is 30 years lower than it would be if she were born in Germany? If we do not act on their behalf, "we the peoples" will be nothing more than hollow words for them. Kofi Annan once said, "We don't need any more promises. We need to start keeping the promises we already made." (*SG/SM/9095*)

When Germany joins the Security Council as a non-permanent member in a few weeks' time, that will be what motivates us. I thank the members of the Assembly for the immense trust they have shown in us through their votes. That trust is an incentive for us to play our part in tackling the world's crises, and to do so with courage and hope, but without overestimating ourselves. We want to work with all Member States as a reliable partner putting dialogue and cooperation at the heart of its action. In our view, "we the peoples" refers in particular to those who find it hard to be heard at the United Nations. That means we will always seek dialogue with civil society, in the Security Council and beyond.

Nevertheless, "we the peoples" also means that the Security Council itself must become more representative and inclusive. The world's population has more than tripled since 1945, while the number of States Members of the United Nations has almost quadrupled. Yet the Security Council has hardly changed at all. That is why we should stop beating around the bush and finally start real negotiations on Security Council reform, as the vast majority of Member States have wanted for a long time.

The crisis of multilateralism is most painfully evident in Syria. The civil war has long since turned into a widespread regional conflict, with further potential for escalation in an already ravaged part of the world. That sort of war cannot be resolved by military means, because the players in the region are too deeply involved and the individual stakes are too high. However, with united diplomatic efforts, we have managed to prevent escalation in Idlib, which is a glimmer of hope. The agreement between Turkey and Russia must now be permanently implemented. But ultimately, and at long last, we need a political process.

To that end, talks must be held under the auspices of the United Nations. In resolution 2254 (2015), the Security Council itself showed the way. We must finally take the path to free and fair elections. At that point, we will also be willing to shoulder responsibility for reconstruction. However, there is one line that we will not cross: we will not become accomplices to a regime that has forfeited its political legitimacy. Instead, we are doing our utmost to alleviate people's suffering.

It is shameful that financial support is running out once again. As the second-largest humanitarian donor, Germany is willing to provide the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees with a further €116 million — that is, half of the amount currently needed — to help Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon. But others also need to step up. After all, the Charter talks about "we the peoples".

Disruptive foreign-policy approaches have now also reached the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Many people are keen to make us believe that the notion of a negotiated two-State solution is obsolete. They want us to think that it is now merely a term used in diplomacy and can no longer be achieved. But whatever way they twist it, there will be lasting peace only if people can determine the course of their own lives, living in security and dignity on both sides of the 1967 lines. For that very reason, it remains important to work for a negotiated two-State solution, 25 years after Oslo.

The conflict in Ukraine will also continue to compel our attention. Along with France, Russia and Ukraine, we are working hard to implement the Minsk agreements. The focus is on the measures agreed to a long time ago with a view to stabilizing the ceasefire. All efforts, including our discussions on a possible United Nations mission in eastern Ukraine, are aimed at achieving that end.

Let us not forget that acute crisis management is at best a step towards peace. Lasting peace can be achieved only if we put a stop to the arms race. That is not some sort of nostalgic rhetoric from the days of the Cold War, whose balance of terror seems utterly benign compared to the scenario of a multipolar arms race with far more unpredictable players.

In the case of North Korea, the Security Council's united stance and sanctions helped to pave the way back to dialogue. That was important. However, North Korea must follow up its words with deeds, and that must lead to complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization. Germany is prepared to contribute its know-how, including the expertise we gained during the difficult negotiations with Iran.

The nuclear agreement with Iran may not be perfect. But so far, it has prevented Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons and averted an escalation that was highly likely three years ago. That is not insignificant. We Europeans, together, therefore stand by the agreement. We are working on keeping economic exchange with Iran possible, and we call on Iran to continue to fully live up to its commitments. The fact that we stand by the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action does not mean that we are turning a blind eye to Iran's destructive role in the region or to its ballistic-missile programme. That said, if there were no agreement, that would not make the search for solutions in Yemen, Syria or elsewhere any easier. On the contrary, disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation must generally become more of a focus of the work of the United Nations once again. We share the view of Secretary-General Guterres on this matter.

Our shared rules must keep pace with technological developments. Otherwise, what currently sounds like science fiction may very soon become deadly reality, as exemplified by autonomous weapons systems, or killer robots that kill without any human control. I call

on Members to support, both here in New York and in Geneva, our initiative to ban fully autonomous weapons before it is too late.

It is not only in that domain that prevention is the right answer. The United Nations of the twenty-first century must tackle the root causes of conflict, including climate change. Action based solely on nationalism, with each country seeking to put itself first, reaches its limits in that respect, not least because our climate knows no borders. The alarm bells have rarely sounded as loudly as they did in the summer of 2018 in almost all parts of the world.

Germany and the European Union stand by the Paris Agreement. Moreover, we want to ensure that the Security Council makes the devastating effects that climate change can have on the security and stability of entire countries and regions an even greater priority.

We also need a quantum leap when it comes to post-conflict peacebuilding. That is why Germany will contribute at least €25 million to the Peacebuilding Fund this year. Over the past three years, Germany has tripled its contributions to efforts aimed at promoting stabilization and preventing crises around the world. For example, in Iraq, where Islamic State terrorists have mostly been militarily defeated, instead of leaving the Iraqi authorities to fend for themselves, we are training security forces to support administrative structures and providing civil support for efforts to promote stabilization, reconciliation and inclusive reconstruction.

Only when military measures are embedded in a clear political strategy can peacekeepers truly bring peace. That is also the objective of the peacekeeping reform efforts of Secretary-General Guterres. It would be a mistake to limit our discussion to bartering over decimal points in scales for assessed contributions. Of course efficiency is important, including for us in Europe, who are the largest contributors of funding. However, discussing potential cost savings alone does not do justice to the benefits that peacekeeping missions bring, for example, in countries such as Mali or Lebanon, which have held peaceful elections and enjoyed relative stability, thanks in part to the Blue Helmets and the political efforts of the United Nations.

We Germans will continue to contribute, not only militarily and financially but also, always, politically, through diplomatic efforts and by investing in stability and reconstruction. After all, the success of United Nations missions hinges on the political backing of Member States. That is particularly true for Libya right now. To tackle the Herculean task of making progress on functioning State structures, the United Nations needs our political support.

Peace is more than guns falling silent. Only just societies, societies where men and women enjoy equal rights and where women participate in all societal decision-making, will remain peaceful in the long term. It is not only a matter of fairness and respect; it is simply a question of humanity and reason. Kofi Annan put it this way in his report entitled "In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all":

> "we will not enjoy development without security, we will not enjoy security without development, and we will not enjoy either without respect for human rights" (*A/59/2005, para. 17*).

Seventy years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that instrument's proclamation of dignity and personal freedom remains merely a distant promise for many. In the Security Council, the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly, we will demand accountability when human rights are trampled on, be it through human trafficking in Africa or attacks on the Rohingya in Myanmar. Nowhere will impunity stand. Even in war, there are limits.

We must hold to account those who wilfully attack humanitarian aid workers, hospitals and schools. Anyone who violates the most basic rules of human civilization must be punished. That also applies to those who use chemical weapons in breach of a taboo that was respected for decades. That is why it is so important that the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has been mandated to seek and identify those responsible. The perpetrators must be fully aware that there can be no impunity for crimes against humanity — never, and not anywhere. In that regard, the International Criminal Court remains indispensable because it sends a clear message to the victims and the perpetrators of the most serious crimes that justice will prevail.

Earlier, I spoke about how we Germans in particular have faith when it comes to multilateralism. That faith is also based on the fact that the United Nations, time and again and despite all disagreements, delivers proof of what we can achieve by working together. I am thinking

of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which remains our guiding set of principles for making this a better world for all people. I am also thinking about the successful conclusion of the negotiations on the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. The fact that more than 190 Member States — countries of origin, transit and destination — reached agreement on such complex and controversial issues is a victory for multilateralism. That success is an achievement of nations that are truly united.

The United Nations is built on our courage to reach compromises. The Organization grows with our desire to shape things. It thrives on our common pledge to act together first. Common ground is created when we put people at the heart of what we do. The desire for peace and security, and the dream of a prosperous and dignified life, are things that all people can relate to, whether they live in Baghdad, Berlin or Bamako. The United Nations belongs to the people. It is to them — the peoples of "We the peoples" — that we owe allegiance.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Khemais Jhinaoui, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tunisia.

Mr. Jhinaoui (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, it gives me pleasure to congratulate Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés and her friendly country, Ecuador, on her election as President of the General Assembly at the current session. I wish her success in that noble task. I also want to express my appreciation to Mr. Miroslav Lajčák and his friendly country, Slovakia, for his successful leadership of the previous session.

I would be remiss not to express my appreciation for the efforts of Secretary-General António Guterres to promote the role of the Organization in achieving security, peace and development throughout the world, and our appreciation and support for the reforms and initiatives that he has undertaken since assuming office.

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate our sincere condolences to the family of the late Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations, and to the African continent, recalling his invaluable work in the service of international peace and security while supporting human rights and contributing effectively to the Organization's development and reform.

The theme of this session — "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies" — reflects our shared aspirations for a global organization capable of effectively addressing current challenges. It also underscores our joint desire to enhance the Organization's role in the service of peace and security, while building more equitable and effective international relations and strengthening sustainable development efforts.

We believe that tackling those challenges is a matter of joint responsibility, calling for intense and concerted efforts to eradicate hotbeds of tension, armed conflicts and disputes, as well as the unprecedented human suffering they inflict. Those hotbeds also exacerbate the phenomenon of terrorism and violent extremism, as well as all forms of organized crime, in addition to a decline in growth rates and increases in poverty and marginalization, together with economic recession in many parts of the world.

In that regard, Tunisia reaffirms the responsibility of the international community, as represented in our Organization, to pursue the political settlement of ongoing disputes, resolve conflicts by peaceful means, achieve security and stability and promote human rights for the sake of safe and sustainable societies. While we are pleased with the results of the negotiations on the major reforms initiated by the Secretary-General, particularly in reviewing the international system pertaining to security and peace and promoting development on a regular basis, we hope that those reforms will be supported by effective contributions from all States Members of the United Nations in accordance with a comprehensive vision that entrenches the principles of partnership and equality in international relations, as well as equitable representation on the Security Council, while enabling the General Assembly to take on its full responsibilities in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. True to the firm principles of our foreign policy, Tunisia will spare no effort in working to effectively contribute to the efforts to realize those noble objectives.

Tunisia continues to steadfastly enhance democratic governance and a State based on law and institutions through a consensual and participatory approach across the political spectrum and every sector of Tunisian society. Over the past year, we have taken further steps to strengthen constitutional institutions and fight corruption while enhancing good governance. We held democratic municipal elections in May to operationalize the very important constitutional principle of participatory democracy and decentralized

local governance. Through that principle, we hope to promote local development programmes and reduce disparities between entities.

Like the presidential and legislative elections held in 2014, those municipal elections resulted in a high level of representation of young people and women, reflecting an awareness in Tunisian society of the importance of including women and young people in decision-making at the local and national levels.

Based on our belief in human rights and fundamental freedoms as two of the pillars of democracy, and in accordance with our international commitments and the provisions of the 2014 Constitution, President Beji Caïd Essebsi of Tunisia has launched a reform initiative to enhance equality and the status of women, with a dedicated committee established to that end. That initiative is currently subject to a comprehensive dialogue engaging participants from across Tunisian society. As such, it is a natural extension of Tunisia's pioneering experiment in reforms aimed at establishing a progressive society that respects individual rights and collective freedoms, empowers women and achieves full equality between men and women.

We are aware that enhancing and sustaining the emerging sustainable democratic experience in Tunisia are contingent on achieving economic recovery, addressing our current difficulties and strengthening social harmony. Those are priority objectives for our Government, in line with our 2016-2020 national development plan and in the context of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Tunisia remains committed to pursuing major reform to improve growth rates and other human development indicators, in particular by creating work opportunities for young people and promoting internal and external investment. Despite major security and development challenges, including the destabilization of the regional and international situations and its direct effect on Tunisia's security, growth and economic interests, we recently recorded positive and encouraging results — rising growth, falling unemployment and trade deficits, and recovery in the tourism sector, with an increase in investment indicators. We believe that those positive indicators enhance Tunisia's status as an attractive environment for regional and international investment.

Tunisia depends not only on its own national capabilities but also on strong relations of cooperation and partnership with regional and international partners. We would like to affirm our appreciation for the support that the Tunisian experiment has received from our long-standing friends and partners the world over and to stress our interest in further expanding such cooperative partnerships to serve our shared interests and strengthen security and stability nationally and internationally.

Terrorism represents one of the most prominent challenges to our countries, with no exceptions. It is also one of the gravest challenges to international peace and security. Terrorist organizations seek to destabilize countries, spread chaos and obstruct development. To confront that threat, we underscore the central role played by the United Nations in supporting Member States in eliminating terrorism and violent extremism. In that regard, we consider the establishment of the Office of Counter-Terrorism an important step for better coordinating and enhancing multilateral cooperation in that area.

While national, regional and international efforts to combat terrorist activities are important, we believe it is an equally important priority to tackle extremist ideologies and protect our societies, particularly young people, against secrecy and extreme violence. We also stress the importance of supporting international cooperation mechanisms for the exchange of information, expertise and judicial assistance and providing support to countries at the forefront of combating that scourge.

Tunisia has made significant progress in implementing its comprehensive national strategy to combat terrorism and violent extremism, which has helped us to realize security gains in terms of tackling that dangerous scourge, thwarting terrorist plots, bringing terrorists to justice and safeguarding democracy while respecting the rule of law

In recent years, the world has witnessed an unprecedented upsurge in flows of refugees and migrants resulting from protracted crises, worsening armed conflicts and related human suffering, disrupted security, hampered development and a lack of the conditions necessary for a decent life. Despite its increase in recent years, migration remains one of the principal manifestations of interaction and communication among human societies. Throughout history, it has contributed to rapprochement among cultures and civilizations. We believe that tackling

migration and refugee flows requires a comprehensive and integrated approach that takes into account the root causes of the two issues and prioritizes the importance of providing a dignified life for refugees and migrants, respecting their rights and human dignity and protecting them from criminal networks and all forms of exploitation.

We must mobilize international efforts to address the underlying causes of migration, including the inadequate sustainable development in many countries of origin. There is also a need to address exacerbated conflicts and wars, as well as the international community's failure to bridge the gap between developing and developed countries.

Tunisia hopes that the two United Nations global compacts on migration and refugees will pave the way to the international consensus needed on this issue. We underscore the importance of promoting cooperation among all components of the international community in order to settle disputes and support the development efforts of Member States, as well as of promoting avenues for organized migration. While we understand the apprehension of some States, we emphasize the need to put a stop to hostile activities and practices against migrants and refugees and all forms of extremism, including in political discourse and media campaigns, when addressing the issue.

Continued conflicts and regional and international crises unquestionably result in increased tension and a lack of stability and security. In that respect, achieving the desired just, comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question is an urgent priority. It would enable us to restore peace and stability to the Middle East region, thereby allowing our brother Palestinian people to recover their legitimate rights and establish an independent State of Palestine on their territory, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with resolutions of international legitimacy, the Arab Peace Initiative and a two-State solution.

Tunisia calls on the international community to shoulder its responsibility to provide the necessary protection for the Palestinian people and preserve the legal and historical status of the city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif, as well as all other occupied Palestinian territories. Tunisia has spared no effort within its own abilities to provide support to the Palestinian people and implores the international community to redouble its efforts in order to put an end to Palestinians' humanitarian suffering. That includes supporting the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East so that it can continue to provide assistance to Palestinian refugees.

Tunisia is deeply concerned about the developments in Libya and the serious deterioration of the security situation in its capital, Tripoli. Tunisia renews its commitment to undertaking efforts — at the initiative of President Essebsi, and in full cooperation with our brother countries of Egypt and Algeria — to assist our Libyan brothers in overcoming their differences. Precedence should be given to Libya's interests so that the desired political settlement can be achieved through dialogue and reconciliation on the basis of the Libyan Political Agreement, facilitated by the United Nations.

In that regard, Tunisia underscores its support for the United Nations Action Plan for Libya and calls for uniting all efforts to address the Libyan crisis, without interfering in Libyan internal affairs and avoiding military options, in order to achieve peace and security, lessen the suffering of the Libyan people and accelerate the implementation of the Action Plan.

We also call for regional and international efforts to be redoubled in order to arrive at a comprehensive political solution to the crisis in Syria as soon as possible, in a way that preserves the unity and territorial integrity of that brotherly country and puts an end to the suffering of the Syrian people while achieving their aspirations for security, stability and democracy.

We also hope that the international community will be able to help the parties in Yemen begin a dialogue in order to arrive at a political solution that supports legitimacy while preserving the unity of that brotherly country, as well as its territorial integrity. We hope that such a solution will end the suffering of the Yemeni people and guarantee the safety, security and stability of the Arab Gulf region.

Given our joint responsibility to ensure a universal system for the promotion of human rights for all, including the right to security and life, we call for accelerating the efforts to address the issue of Rohingya Muslims while ensuring the safe and voluntary return of refugees and working to tackle the underlying causes of the crisis.

Considering the importance with which we view being part of the African continent, which represents our strategic depth, Tunisia supports joint African efforts.

We are committed to the African Union's Agenda 2063 development plan and are ready to actively engage in advancing the continent's prospects. We would also like to appeal to the international community to assist in promoting peace and security on the continent so that the peoples of Africa can achieve their aspirations for sustainable development and economic integration.

In that context, Tunisia greatly appreciates the agreement between the leaders of Ethiopia and Eritrea to end the long-standing dispute between the two countries. It has given new impetus to bilateral cooperation in the interests of the two neighbouring peoples on a path to achieving security, stability and development. Tunisia also hopes that that historic reconciliation between the two countries can be a first step towards ending all differences in the Horn of Africa region and setting an example to be followed in terms of eliminating tensions and settling disputes on the entire African continent.

With regard to the situation in the Korean peninsula, we are pleased with the results of the recent summits between the President of South Korea and the leader of North Korea, as well as the summit between the President of the United States and the leader of North Korea. We note the historic transformation of the Korean peninsula and the commitment of the two Koreas to cooperating in the future. We hope that the international community will make every effort to assist both countries in ending tensions on the Korean peninsula and restoring trust between them by denuclearizing the peninsula and ridding it of weapons of mass destruction in order to achieve peace.

With Arab and African support, Tunisia is ready to join the Security Council once again as a non-permanent member for the period from 2020 to 2021. It is a goal that we hope to achieve with the support of all our friends and partners in the international community. If elected, Tunisia will work throughout its membership of the Council to ensure its commitment to the Charter of the United Nations, as well as its readiness to promote consultations. We would emphasize the importance of arriving at acceptable solutions to all the items on our agenda in the service of world peace and security.

In conclusion, I reiterate Tunisia's commitment to continue to make every possible effort to cooperate with all sisterly and friendly countries in order to achieve the noble objectives of the United Nations in the service of humankind in order to uphold those lofty universal values.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ibrahim Abdulkarim Al-Jafari, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iraq.

Mr. Al-Jafari (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, it is my pleasure to congratulate Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. I wish her every success in discharging her duties in that role. I would also like to express my appreciation to her predecessor, Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, who steered the work of the previous session with wisdom and efficiency.

Last year, from this rostrum, I addressed the General Assembly on the situation in my country, Iraq (see A/72/PV.20). In the years prior to that, Da'esh had occupied a third of Iraq's territory, burned everything in sight, destroyed monuments in Nineveh — dating back to the time when my country was the cradle of civilization — as well as the Mosque of the Prophet Yunus, expelled 6 million Iraqis from the provinces it occupied, preyed on the Yazidi religious minority by kidnapping its women, drove out ethnic Turkmen from Tal Afar and killed Shia men and women there by burning them alive.

All of that could have been a catastrophe of historic proportions from which we could never recover. However, although despair had seized the hearts and minds of many, there were still many of us whose full faith in God never wavered. Many of us were confident that the determination of Iraqi men and women of all ages and the intelligence of our leaders could turn the tide. The people of Iraq, of all faiths and ethnic backgrounds, came together to defend their country. They shed their blood on the battlefield and made immense sacrifices to liberate the lands occupied by Da'esh. Thousands in the ranks of the heroic Iraqi armed forces, police and popular militias were martyred or injured, as were members of the Peshmerga, counter-terrorism forces and other groups. We led that fight with honour on behalf of the entire world, with the support of the international coalition against Da'esh and of our friends, brothers and neighbours. Every one of them deserves our full recognition, and Iraq will never forget those who stood by it.

That crucial historic battle took place at a time when the safety of the whole world was under attack. Terrorists' attempts to extend their reach to ever more

parts of the planet attracted adherents representing more than 120 different nationalities. We thank God for the support of the international community, whose assistance made it possible for us to vanquish that ferocious enemy and put an end to the Da'esh presence in Iraq. It is now on its last legs in its final stronghold, in Syria.

I am addressing the General Assembly today as my country is leavings behind that period of war and entering a new one characterized by reconstruction and the return of the displaced persons who were driven from their homes and fled to various corners of the globe. In this new chapter in the history of Iraq, we are working hard to strengthen State institutions, enhance participation in governance and build political and constitutional consensus in our national affairs, with a view to joining the club of democratic nations. We are abandoning sectarianism of every kind and uniting people around respect for law and the Constitution. Most recently, as part of the democratic electoral cycle that has been in place since 2004, we held parliamentary elections. We will soon elect a new President of the Republic, who will in turn appoint a new Prime Minister whose principal task will be to form a Government responsible for fighting corruption and putting the country on a path to development and prosperity.

As I address the Assembly today, Iraqis in the Kurdistan region of Iraq are preparing for regional parliamentary elections, in accordance with our federal multiparty system. In the light of that, I call on the international community to honour the financial pledges made at the Kuwait International Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq earlier this year, on the basis of our being a promising country and a cradle of civilization. Indeed, since Iraq sits at the crossroads of different civilizations, religions and nationalities, we are endowed with a wealth of traditions.

The military victory over terrorism did not necessarily spell the end of terrorism. Rather, we have simply entered a new phase in our efforts to totally eradicate its causes. We should strive to create a strategic plan with economic, cultural and political dimensions so as to immunize communities against the dangers of the return of terrorism. We should also address the issues that relate to young people, women and children, putting in place programmes to improve their standard of living, build capacity within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and especially to tackle unemployment. We must also protect diversity, support minorities, maintain peace and security in liberated areas and move from national reconciliation to the strengthening of the national institutions in which all Iraqis have a stake.

Today Iraqis are making every effort to move forward as a single, united geographical entity, rejecting all forms of division, foreign interference and partition. Most recently, we have made important advances in fighting terrorism, strengthening democracy and keeping to the schedule set for parliamentary elections. We continue to fight to protect human rights, political plurality and the freedom of expression, having enacted detailed legislation in those areas.

In standing by Iraq through the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), the United Nations has made significant sacrifices. As UNAMI continues to work to fulfil its mandate, I want to acknowledge the key role played by Mr. Ján Kubiš, Special Representative and Head of the Mission, whose achievements in our country have been considerable. We also welcome the appointment of his successor, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, who is the first woman to be appointed Head of the Mission.

We continue to strive to end the effects of the war against terrorism on displaced persons by providing them with reparations, ensuring their return and collecting evidence for the crimes committed against them by the Da'esh terrorist organization in Iraq. That work is being done through the commission that was set up pursuant to Security Council resolution 2379 (2017) to document the crimes committed by Da'esh.

The Government of Iraq believes that the maintenance of international peace and security is the responsibility of all of us. We stress the importance of ensuring that the international community continues to act to completely eliminate nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction, with a view to guaranteeing the safety and security of future generations. We support the universalization of all treaties and conventions on disarmament, as they are the only concrete guarantee that there will be no use or threat of use of such weapons. Iraqis paid a heavy price when weapons of this kind were used against them during their time under dictatorship. The Assembly will recall that the inhabitants of the city of Halabja were victims of chemical weapons in one of the most egregious criminal acts in history, and that the Shia in

central and southern Iraq were subjected to similarly egregious mass killings, as were members of other sects.

My Government is working to overcome the economic crisis by making the best possible use of its resources, establishing economic partnerships and creating an environment favourable to investment in order to benefit from available opportunities and achieve sustainable economic development.

Iraq reaffirms its steadfast position with regard to the Palestinian question. We emphasize that there is no chance for peace in our region until Israel, the occupying Power, fully withdraws from the Palestinian and Arab occupied territories. We call for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. We condemn the settlement policy pursued by the Israeli occupying authorities in violation of international law. In that regard, Iraq categorically rejects once again the step taken by the United States in relocating its Embassy to East Jerusalem. That action will not serve to further the cause of peace in the region and renders the situation even more complicated.

Iraq rejects unilateral blockades imposed outside the context of the United Nations system, and believes that economic sanctions are not a way to punish governing regimes or organizations under an acceptable or unacceptable pretext. It is the people who suffer the unjust consequences of such sanctions. The Iraqi people were victims of sanctions that lasted for nearly 13 years, from 1990 to 2003. Ordinary Iraqi people — men and woman, the elderly, the young and children — paid the heaviest price for those economic sanctions. We are not in favour of any blockade, because it is against the people.

Turning to security, we believe that it is an indivisible whole. We cannot pursue security within our own borders while paying no heed to that of our neighbours. Security goes hand in hand with broader geopolitical concerns. When dealing with geosecurity, it is not enough to focus on one country's need. We must ensure that the needs of our neighbours are met as well.

Iraq welcomes the agreement on the situation in the Korean peninsula, which is in line with the purposes of the United Nations with regard to maintaining international peace and security.

We also hope that peace and stability will be restored in Syria, ending the spiral of violence there and preserving its territorial integrity, while supporting all political tracks that can lead to a balanced political solution acceptable to the Syrian Government and other Syrian parties. That would help to avoid more bloodshed and the death of innocent civilians. We therefore urge the political stakeholders to work seriously towards this type of political solution rather than a military one.

Turning to Yemen, we believe that a solution to the crisis there can be found only through peaceful dialogue. The conflict must come to an end, the guns of war must be silenced and all external interference must cease.

As for Bashiqa, Iraq categorically rejects the presence of Turkish forces there and the continued violations of Iraq's sovereignty. We aspire to excellent and good-neighbourly relations with Turkey like those we have with other neighbouring countries. However, we call on Turkey to take a clear position with regard to those violations and to put an end to them.

We also call for an increase in Iraq's legitimate water resources. The loss of those resources has led to significantly reduced water levels in the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, resulting in adverse environmental and economic effects with serious repercussions for the future. In the fourth millennium B.C. it was on the banks of those two rivers that the first civilization in human history emerged from the southern marshes, from Al-Amara and Al-Nasiriyya. We therefore feel responsible for preserving our rights and cultural heritage.

Iraq categorically rejects the statements by the Prime Minister of the Israeli entity claiming the presence of Iranian forces in Iraq as justification for an attack on our sovereignty. We reject any attempt to use the rostrum of the General Assembly to undermine the sovereignty and security of States.

We have worked recently to build close relations with all our neighbours and other friendly countries, moving away from polarization and international partisanship. We have sought to be a diplomatic bridge by establishing excellent relations and communications with all stakeholders in the region and worldwide so as to have a positive impact on the achievement of security in the region.

Iraq will remain a cradle of cultural, religious and ethnic diversity. As Sargon of Akkad said, Baghdad will remain the dome of the world, and whoever reigns over

it will control the four winds of the world. Baghdad will never face death and destruction. It will withstand the crisis and its brutality. Baghdad is a creator of life. Our great poet Mustapha Jamal Al-Din addressed Baghdad by saying that it will continue to live. Baghdad will remain resplendent as the centuries pass. It will shine under the sun and the moon. Thanks to its resilience, it will withstand any adversity.

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Ulla Tørnæs, Minister for Development Cooperation of Denmark.

Ms. Tørnæs (Denmark): At the outset, I would like to join others in paying tribute to the memory of the late Kofi Annan, a true world leader and a firm believer in the strength of this Organization.

Seventy years ago, the General Assembly adopted the first global human rights charter, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It codified the most basic principles of human dignity, emphasizing that we are all equal. We committed to an international order in which rights and freedoms could be fully realized.

Seventy years ago, we knew that international cooperation was the only way to protect our populations, and through this Organization, we have delivered remarkable results.

Still, the foundation on which this Organization is built has perhaps never been under more pressure than it is today. The very principle of multilateralism is being questioned. Doubt is being cast on the frameworks that protect human rights, ensure free trade and promote global development. Insufficient action is being taken on global problems such as climate change, poverty, migration, terrorism and violent extremism.

To Denmark, the path forward is clear. Global challenges require global solutions. To that end, we need a strong United Nations, with its unique legitimacy and its universal membership, a United Nations that delivers on its full potential.

Denmark remains committed to the Secretary-General's reform agenda. This year we open the General Assembly with three agreed tracks for reform. Together with Algeria, Denmark had the honour to facilitate the negotiations on reform of the development system. We are proud of the result, and we will continue to play a constructive role in the important implementation ahead. For instance, Denmark intends to contribute more than $10 million to support the establishment of the new Resident Coordinator system, and we encourage others to follow suit.

Member States have clearly voiced their support. Now the reforms must be turned into reality. The world expects a new and more streamlined United Nations to emerge. Every entity of the United Nations must embrace this opportunity to change and make real improvements for the benefit of our peoples.

As Member States, we must also reinvest in the United Nations and take responsibility for our multilateral cooperation and the rules-based international order. That is why Denmark has presented its candidature for membership of the Human Rights Council for the 2019-2021 term. If elected, we will promote the rights and equal opportunities of women, continue our long-standing fight against torture, work to protect the rights of indigenous peoples and encourage freedom of religion and belief. That must be done without discrimination on any ground, including sexual orientation and gender identity. That is the Danish DNA and the DNA of the United Nations.

In several parts of the world, gender equality is but a distant hope. Women's rights are under increasing pressure. We cannot accept that; we must stand up and challenge it. Every woman must be able to unleash her potential — without question — to the benefit of all. We must ensure that she is the one making the decisions concerning her. Gender equality and equal opportunities are not only fundamental human rights but preconditions for development, peace and prosperity in any country, anywhere in the world.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change set out a strong global vision for achieving a more sustainable planet. Denmark is committed to that common vision. For more than 40 consecutive years, we have proudly delivered on the United Nations target of providing 0.7 per cent of our gross national income as official development assistance (ODA). Sadly, we are in a group that has far too few members. While ODA is crucial for ensuring global development, we need the involvement of all actors, especially the private sector, civil society and local authorities.

We must give young people a seat at the table in order to ensure that development is pursued not just for young people but with and by them. That is why Denmark was the first country to announce a contribution to the Secretary-General's new Youth

2030 strategy. We congratulate the United Nations and all young people on that strategy and look forward to seeing it in action.

Member States and the United Nations system have to adapt to the world around us and embrace and use new technologies. We need the innovative ideas, the finance and the expertise that only the private sector can bring to the table. In short, in order to attain the Sustainable Development Goals over the next 12 years, we must rethink the way we do business here. The clock is ticking. That is one of the reasons that Denmark, together with its partners, launched the Partnering for Green Growth and the Global Goals 2030 (P4G) initiative. Through the P4G network, we bring together major companies, cities, civil society, think tanks and Governments to boost and create partnerships for a greener tomorrow. In October, Denmark will host a high-level P4G summit in Copenhagen to forge and accelerate such partnerships.

Education provides the foundations for knowledge and for harnessing the technologies and opportunities of tomorrow. When it comes to education, we can and must do better, much better. Globally, 130 million girls do not go to school. In crisis situations, girls are two and a half times less likely to be at school than boys. Girls are at much greater risk than boys of being victims of sexual abuse or exploitation, and much more likely to be affected by child marriage or childbirth. Just think. In some parts of the world, girls as young as nine years old are being forced to marry adult men. That is not acceptable. We must let girls be girls, not brides.

Education is a beacon of hope for those girls. That is why Denmark is now the largest contributor to Education Cannot Wait, and why we will spend almost $70 million next year on education in developing countries, because Denmark wants to ensure that no girl will be left behind.

Displacement and unsafe and irregular migration pose a significant global challenge that requires determined efforts at all levels. In July, Denmark welcomed the finalization of the negotiations on a global compact on migration. The compact establishes a global framework for common action and a much-needed path for managing irregular migration in a safe and orderly manner and for curbing irregular migration, including through the facilitation of return, with respect for human rights and the principle of State sovereignty at its core.

We also welcome the agreement on the global compact on refugees. Denmark is, per capita, one of the world's largest humanitarian donors. A key focus of ours is helping refugees and internally displaced persons in their efforts to attain a life of safety and dignity. By ensuring close coordination between our humanitarian and development aid, Denmark helps to build the foundation for lasting solutions and safe return when the time is right.

The horrors in Syria, Yemen and elsewhere tell the grim story of why humanitarian efforts are so desperately needed. The conflict in Syria rages into its eighth year. So many have already experienced unspeakable suffering, evil and atrocities. Three million people have been on the brink of humanitarian catastrophe in Idlib. The tragedy in Syria cannot continue.

Earlier this week, Member States honoured Nelson Mandela. In a fitting celebration of an iconic proponent of peace, leaders from across the world underscored the importance of our joint commitment to building a peaceful and prosperous world.

As we push for reforms and strengthen our multilateral institutions, we must acknowledge the interconnectedness of today's global challenges. We need integrated and shared approaches to stabilization, peacebuilding and conflict prevention. That is why Denmark has been a strong supporter of the Peacebuilding Fund. We are proud to step up our commitment with a new contribution to the Fund of $15 million over the next three years.

The world is witnessing armed conflicts that could have been prevented or stopped years ago. Too many States are failing in their responsibility to protect their own populations against the most horrific crimes.

Denmark will continue to insist on accountability for the most appalling crimes. Such crimes must never go unpunished, and the victims deserve justice. This year we mark the twentieth anniversary of the establishment of the International Criminal Court, a landmark achievement aimed at ensuring accountability and justice.

The recent report of the United Nations Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar (A/HRC/39/64) clearly underlines the need for accountability in relation to the Rohingya crisis. At the same time, we must not forget the enormous need for humanitarian assistance and development aid. I am happy to announce

that Denmark will provide another $7 million as an extraordinary humanitarian response to that crisis. That is in addition to the $46 million we have already provided since 2017. Denmark also provides support to the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Myanmar.

The situation on the Korean peninsula is a strong reminder of what is at stake. Denmark fully supports the continuing efforts by South Korea and the United States to seek a diplomatic solution with the North Korean regime. North Korea must now take concrete steps towards complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization. Until then, sanctions and international pressure must remain firmly in place.

The problems facing the world are dire. We will be successful only if we act together. Multilateralism and cooperation must be the foundation. The task may seem impossible, but we have done it before. With the United Nations, we have fostered an international order, a strong set of common values, rules and goals. People around the world demand solutions. The United Nations cannot let them down. Now is the time for us to reform and rebuild this institution.

The meeting rose at 3.35 p.m.